DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 140 341 CS 203 480

AUTHOR Schwoebel, Jean; Hardt, Hanno, Ed.
TITLE Newsroom Democracy: The Case for Independence of the Press. Monograph Series, No. 2.
INSTITUTION Iowa Univ., Iowa City. School of Journalism.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 70p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Democratic Values; *Freedom of Speech; History; *Information Dissemination; *Journalism; News Reporting; *Press Opinion; *Professional Associations; Publishing Industry
IDENTIFIERS France; *Freedom of Information; *Le Monde

ABSTRACT

Today there is a growing realization among journalists that providing information should be a real service in the public interest, which is free from the domination of private interests, and that there should be structures that guarantee the independence of journalists and the promotion of responsible and responsive journalism. In France, the "Le Monde" organization has pioneered the idea of democratizing news organizations so that journalists and readers participate in the management of information and in important decisions at the heart of press enterprises. This monograph, which is based on Jean Schwoebel's book, "La Presse, le Pouvoir et l'Argent," outlines the ideas and principles on which the "Le Monde" organization is based. Separate chapters deal with the importance of the right to information in modern society; irresponsible journalistic practices caused by the financial considerations of the commercial press; background and early history of "Le Monde"; the growth of other journalists' associations in France; the foundation of the French Federation of Journalists' Association; and the rationale for a new type of limited-profit publishing company in which the founders and journalists share ownership equally. (GW)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED140741

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Newsroom Democracy
The Case for
Independence of the Press

Jean Schwoebel

Monograph Series: Number 2
Hanno Hardt, editor

Iowa Center for Communication Study
School of Journalism
University of Iowa

Iowa City, Iowa 52242

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL BY MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Iowa Center for Communication Study
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER.

Spring 1976

©1976

2

CS 203 480

Contents

Introduction 1

Preface 3

Preface (1968) 14

I. The Importance of Information in Modern Society 17

II. A Commercial Press 25

III. The Birth of Journalists' Associations 31

IV. The Growth of Journalists' Associations 46

V. A New Federation 53

VI. A New Type of Publishing Company 56

VII. Conclusion 64

Introduction

FOR SEVERAL years mass media critics here and abroad have proposed a number of changes in the form and structure of media enterprises. But changes are slow to come, although there is a growing realization that journalists today must be free to act in the interest and with the cooperation of their readers. What has been lacking so far, particularly in the United States, has been a strong organization of the interests of working journalists, a precise formulation of the goals of journalism in contemporary society, and specific proposals to implement the ideas of responsible and responsive journalism.

A major contribution to the debate has been made by the *Le Monde* organization, and by Jean Schwoebel, in particular. His work as the tactician of the movement that introduced the idea of democratizing news organizations to France has been known in this country for some time; however, few details have been available in the past. The publication of this monograph serves to close this gap and to bring to the attention of media practitioners and others some of the ideas and principles on which the *Le Monde* organization bases its success. In addition, it may help introduce the notion of a kind of journalism that has been largely absent in the American context, but may very well be a desirable goal given the available mass media selection and the demands for more explanation and interpretation of the day's events than we have seen in the past.

Lastly, the monograph describes the power of an idea and encourages experimentation with the reformulation of journalistic roles and functions in American society; there is much to learn from the experiences of professional organizations in other parts of the world. Although media reformers may find some of the ideas inapplicable to present working conditions and to media organizations in this country, they will not be able to deny the contribution Jean Schwoebel makes to a dialog between professionals and to the argument for an improvement of the substantive content of the press to maximize the idea of information and education in a democratic society.

This monograph represents an abstract of Jean Schwoebel's book, *La Presse, le Pouvoir et l'Argent*, originally published in 1968 and 1972 by Les Editions du Seuil, Paris.

The history of the preparation of this monograph goes back to a meeting between Alfred Balk, editor and publisher of *atlas*, and Jean Schwoebel in 1970. The resulting interview later appeared in *Columbia Journalism Review* under "The Coming Newsroom Revolution."

In reviewing the developments that led to the publication of the manuscript Mr. Balk writes, "Louis G. Cowan of the Columbia journalism faculty immediately expressed great excitement over Schwoebel's message. A former President of CBS-TV who then was Chairman of CJR's Publishing Committee, he proposed working together to bring ideas and experiences to a wider audience—and in greater depth—than could a small-circulation quarterly. He guaranteed to underwrite the cost of translating Schwoebel's book if I would do at least the preliminary editing. Publication possibilities then would be explored. I agreed. Schwoebel and his French publisher and agent, Paul Flamand, also approved.

A translation and edited manuscript were ready in May, 1974, but considerable effort in the U.S. (and patience by Jean Schwoebel in Paris) proved fruitless..."

The publication of Jean Schwoebel's contribution to modern journalism, then, is a remarkable group effort and credit must go to a number of individuals who believed in the importance of this manuscript and who supported its publication in the United States; they are Mary Burnet who furnished a splendid translation of the manuscript, Tom Schneider and Ulrike Goertz who assisted with the translation of new material; the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation and Louis G. Cowan and Chilmark Press; to Jean Schwoebel and his French publisher and agent, Paul Flamand, for making the manuscript available; to Alfred Balk, who shared the original manuscript with us at the occasion of Jean Schwoebel's visit to the University of Iowa to participate in a seminar on professionalization and the needs of journalism in the future; to Professor Kenneth Starck, who helped organize the seminar and whose support as acting director of the School of Journalism provided needed encouragement to proceed with the project; and, finally, to the journalists of *Le Monde* who live the example of a type of journalism that is responsive to the needs of a democratic society.

The monograph is published by the Iowa Center for Communication Study, which supports faculty and student research and engages in the publication of ongoing and completed investigations of communication and mass communication phenomena.

Hanno Hardt Spring 1976

Preface

Le Figaro, *France-Soir*, *Le Parisien Libéré*, three great names of the Parisian press, which have experienced for a long time and with their very large circulation, a fascinating prosperity which has been a source of considerable profits for their owners, are today encountering the worst difficulties. The other papers are dealing with a disturbing situation. Briefly, the crisis of the press in France, which has continually worsened for several years, is complete from now on. It has reached the point where one asks how the demise of several dailies can possibly be avoided, at least in Paris, and what will happen to the others afterwards. Thus, after the 1972 edition of my book, *La Presse, le Pouvoir et l'Argent* in France, the evolution of the French press, characterized by greater and greater concentration in the provinces, and by more and more acute financial difficulties in Paris, has largely confirmed the fears of the Journalists' Associations and at the same time has justified their warnings and their proposals.

Everywhere, the owners and those responsible for the French daily press continue to see nothing but the financial aspects of the press crisis. They proclaim that this crisis is temporary and liable to be resolved through the usual recourse to the State, to which they are used to turning successfully to use pressure to obtain an increase in aid and a limitation on radio and television advertisements. They do not understand that the times have changed. Even if the government agreed to waste even more of the nation's money on them, in the name of freedom of the press—which they invoke and which is really no more than the freedom of those who own or direct press enterprises, who inform the public to promote their own interests and influence—they would not save the dying newspapers. Unless they were to accept a profound change in their structures and their methods, which would suppose on their part an entirely new mentality.

It is not only a purely temporary financial crisis that the press undergoes today. Basically, it is a crisis of adaptation, due to a profound misunderstanding of the evolution of minds, morals and social relations. Those responsible for the printed press do not always seem

to understand that the press no longer has a monopoly of information it held in the past. Henceforth, the press will be subject to the formidable competition from the new mass media, which make use of a considerable appeal to all classes of the population. Is it necessary to talk about the extraordinary possibilities that cable television and videocassettes add to radio and television? In a time when the possibilities of consumption are multiplying and leisure time has considerably expanded, people spend less and less time reading, particularly newspapers, which no longer respond to their needs and aspirations.

Outworn and aged, the great press that we know is more and more out of touch with the needs and the preoccupations of the new generations, whose importance still does not cease to grow, due to demographic laws and the expansion of higher education. Moreover, very dependent on advertising which assures its essential resources, the press is constrained to a conformism which the new generations accept less and less.

In reality, the first problem that the press must work out today is that of the role it ought to play in the present; profitability will occur in addition. Now, this role is still large in spite of the spectacular development made by the new mass media, particularly in spite of the fascination that television exerts on the masses. Notably, it is left to the press to explain to citizens the meaning of events and to fight unceasingly to secure respect for the rights of man. This double role cannot be realized in the future except through a never ending dialogue on all levels—local, regional, national and international—between the informers and the informed. *It is a very diversified press, very direct and very close to its readers to whom it gives the chance to speak out, that will decide the news coverage of the future,* and not the enormous monopolies, genuine mammoths, which try to please everyone and, in the end, serve no one.

Already, the success of reviews and magazines which multiplied for several years and which are concerned with very diverse subjects—such as fashion, cooking, hunting, cars, stamp collecting—and who knows what else—is evidence of the interest that hundreds of thousands of people have in publications that know how to respond to certain of their tastes, their needs and their preoccupations within particular and precisely defined areas. Similarly, the renaissance of a true information press—that which is devoted to the general information of citizens (political, economic, social and cultural)—will spring from its capacity to respond to the double need of citizens to understand and to express themselves, a need that the success of radio and television only increases and that only the printed press can satisfy, if it understands the need and is capable of acting. In other words, the

future of the press is to establish a permanent dialogue between those who write and those who read, the journalists and the readers, informing each other mutually about what happens above and below. Because information comes not only from above, it comes from everywhere and must do so unceasingly, it must be improved through ceaseless corrections which permit especially the establishment of permanent feedback between the informers and the informed.

Now, this is precisely the opposite of what is the rule today. The principal parties in information matters, those that produce it (the journalists) and those that receive it (the citizens) are totally excluded from decisions that concern the printed press, which is entirely controlled by certain groups, certain families and certain people who derive power from wealth. Thus we have the gloominess of the informers and the slow-down strike of the readers, less and less interested in traditional newspapers which do not respond to the tastes or the preoccupations of the new generations.

The true problem of the press today is its democratization. In other words, it is not only justice and democratic principles that require journalists and readers to be part of the management of information and to participate in important decisions at the heart of press enterprises. It is effectiveness that demands it, it is the necessity to regain readership and thus profitability which is more and more uncommon, at least with the large information press. There is no other way to be profitable, outside of concentrations which resolve the problem for a very short time and really make it worse by eliminating the diversity of information sources and the multiplicity for which citizens sense the need.

These ideas, which are becoming more and more widespread among the public, are beginning to lead to unanimity among the journalists. It is for this reason that the current efforts of the great press owners to restore their past power and their lavish profits, prove to be in vain. Incapable of getting out of their old ruts, they pursue new returns to success and hope to unearth a new Lazareff or a new Prouvost who knows how to find them. At an extravagant price, they hire new directors who create an illusion of well-being for a while, but who are really unable to solve the economic, social, psychological and political problems that are posed by the current situation and the future of the press. It is not only because these gilt-edged directors are not generally well motivated to undertake the reform of methods and structures of which they are the great beneficiaries, a fact which makes them practically accomplices of political power, even though they criticize certain of its representatives. Even if one assumes that they

sincerely want to put an end to the abuses and weaknesses which are killing so many voices of the press, they do not have the means to reform the system from which these abuses and weaknesses derive.

This system is based, in effect, on the absolute control of the press enterprises as private property and on the preponderance of advertising revenues, which condemns it at the same time to the status quo and conformism. The individuals who the owners of the enterprises entrust to reform the situation are powerless to act under such conditions and are soon dismissed with comfortable allowances, which again contribute to jeopardizing the financial situation of the enterprises they were supposed to help.

In short, the press owners no longer control an evolution which they do not understand anyway. Either due to their old age, like M. Prouvost, who just relinquished *Le Figaro*, for whose acquisition he had made great sacrifices, or even if they are younger and have proven to be dynamic, like M. Amaury and M. Hersant—the first, owner of *Le Parisien Libéré*, the second, the new owner of *Le Figaro*—because their brutal or corrupt methods cannot permanently resolve the problems of social and political adaptation and renovation that confront the press. Nevertheless, these men can delay the final accounting through brutal layoffs and through the aid they receive from public agencies which benefit all those in similar straits. The big information press is nonetheless condemned to slow agony preceded by long stagnation.

It will be urgent when the nation's representatives, who are responsible for the common interest, intervene and vote new legislation which recognizes a citizen's right to information and establishes the conditions to permit the greatest possible independence for the mass media and their democratization.

It was precisely to obtain this legislation that the French Federation of Journalists' Associations was created in 1967 and in 1969, in collaboration with Professor Pavsant, initiated a project to enact a statute for press enterprises. This project was largely responsible for the accord which occurred, in January, 1973, among the French Federation of Journalists' Associations, the National Union of Journalists (autonomous), the Union of French Journalists (CFDT) and the General Union of Journalists (FO) during a joint colloquium at the Palais de Luxembourg (referred to as the Senate Colloquium).

There are currently six journalists' unions in France:

a) the SNJ or National Union of Journalists, autonomous, meaning, not affiliated with a central union or a political party. This union, always the most important one, has had its total strength reduced because of the politization of its members.

b) the SNG-CGT, affiliated with the CGT (General Confederation of Workers), the most imporant workers' union in France, which tends to support the socialists and communists. This union is growing.

c) the SGJ-CFDT (Union of French Journalists-French Democratic Confederation of Workers), affiliated with the CFDT, the second most important union in France with democratic and Christian tendencies. This union is making very rapid progress.

d) the SGJ-FO (General Union of Journalists-Worker Force) which is affiliated with the Worker Force union, has social-democratic tendencies and whose numbers are limited.

e) the CGC union affiliated with the General Confederation of Cadres, with corporate and conservative tendencies.

f) the Journalists' Union CFTC (French Confederation of Christian Workers). This union is traditional catholic with very few members.

The first four unions have formed a National Union of Journalists' Unions (UNSJ) whose activity and influence are minimal.

Since their creation, the Editors' Associations and their federation affirm:

1) the citizens' right to information which creates an obligation on the part of government to encourage the existence and the development of an independent, competent and pluralistic press;

2) the right of editorial staffs to exercise powers permitting them to guarantee the independence of their members, the enterprises for which they work, and the scrupulous honesty of the information that the enterprises diffuse, this right being best assured by the Editors' Associations exercising a judicial and moral function;

3) the necessity for a statute for press enterprises which limits the rights of property and assures the public interest character of newspapers as a general information service for citizens;

4) a privileged fiscal position for press enterprises which agree to establish a new form of limited liability company;

5) finally, the creation of a national fund at the disposition of press enterprises in financial difficulty or of new ones in formative stages—provided that the press enterprises can prove that they have or will soon acquire a sufficient audience—the most modern technology and substantial financial aid.

On these different points there is general agreement today among the professional organizations. In a few years a remarkable consciousness raising took place among the journalists concerning their responsibilities toward the public and their rights to better assure that these responsibilities are carried out. In this regard, the Editors' Associations have played an important role. In 1968 they provoked the govern-

ment, at the request of four Senators, to create a commission to examine their objectives and claims. Since then their federation has, with the aid of the Caen Research Center, instigated three colloquia, at Caen in 1970, at the Palais du Luxembourg in 1973 and at Bierville in 1975, which contributed significantly to a consensus between the Editors' Associations and the principal unions of journalists.

This is why the Journalists' Associations and their federation are torn today between pride and sorrow. They are proud to have been the first—in 1951—to affirm the necessity of removing information from the grip of power and money and giving editorial staffs the important powers of control and participation in the heart of press enterprises. They are proud to have given to certain editorial staffs, in France and abroad, the taste for responsibilites, risk and solidarity, to the point of forming an associational structure that legally gave them a judicial and moral character which reinforced their unity and effectiveness. Brilliant breakthroughs were made at *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* concerning the sharing of responsibility. A third attempt failed at *Paris-Normandie*. Other Editors' Associations, like those of *Nord-Eclair* (Lille) and *Alsace* (Mulhouse) have obtained similar, interesting agreements relating to control and consultation. For these results to be widespread would require many more courageous and disinterested militants in France. It would also require the aid of unions which has been absent in the past.

The Editors' Associations are proud that their doctrine is widely known abroad, notably in Western Europe, but also on other continents. In the United States, for example, where it is the object of studies and discussions in numerous schools and institutes of journalism or public relations and in a great number of universities: Columbia, Stanford, Northwestern, University of Iowa, University of Alabama and the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater."

Formulas similar to those of the Editors' Associations, or those more or less advocated by them, have even been adopted in several countries. In Italy, for example, where the editorial staffs have taken the form of editorial committees in which the management and higher echelon employees on one hand, and the elected representatives of the editorial staff on the other, inform and consult each other every month on all problems relative to the publication. In Germany, where *Stern* and *Die Welt* have implemented cooperative structures. In Scandinavia, where the editors of the largest Swedish morning newspaper, the *Dagens Nyheter*, have formed an association based on the model of the Editorial Association of *Le Monde* and obtained the right to choose the "editor-in-chief." In Spain, where the only newspaper that retains

relative freedom of expression, *Le Madrid*, was suppressed by the government in 1971 after its staff had formed a journalists' association with the encouragement of all the Spanish editorial staffs. In Canada, where the journalists of the new daily *Le Jour* have formed an Editors' Association and are represented by two elected members on the board of directors, etc.

In return, the French Editors' Associations and their federation report today with sadness that they have for the most part been preaching in the desert, and that in spite of their appeals and warnings, the political and economic powers everywhere rigidly maintain their control over the resources of information. Notably in France they have not been able to prevent the current press crisis; they have not been able or known how to mobilize the means to solve it. Too weak to bring about this mobilization, the French Federation of Journalists' Associations has not succeeded, in spite of incessant efforts, in getting the unions to cooperate in a common strategy that would cause the profession to be heard and respected by the owners and the government.

Never since the departure of General De Gaulle, who attempted after the events of 1968 to toy with the idea of participation in France, has the collusion been so complete between the owners of the press and the government. Never had the government been so unresponsive to the press. State aid to the press is a perfect revelation of this complicity. As M. Sauvageot, one of the directors of *Le Monde*, has written, "State aid to the press is an attractive subject for study, an ideal theme for banquets. The editors implore, the ministers promise, both of them with the secret satisfaction that they are perpetuating the status quo, that is to say, favoring the fat cats." *The Financial Times* of London has itself recognized that the contemporary press is a bastion of conservatism.

In short, those who hold the property and the control of information today, a source of profit and power, stubbornly refuse all proposed changes. Power and money want to remain the masters. We have seen in Eastern Europe, where one of the principal reasons behind the 1968 Soviet armed intervention to put an end to the experience of humanistic socialism attempted by Dubcek, was the total freedom regained by the press and the willingness of Czech journalists to adjust judicial formulations to assure long lasting independence of thought and expression. We see it in France, where men such as M. Amaury and M. Hersant try without success to break up the editorial staffs of their papers and to reduce them to impotence and finally to servility.

This is to say that the democratization of information in general and of the printed press in particular, is not going to happen tomor-

row. To establish it, costly efforts and difficult and uncertain battles will be necessary for many years. An important publicist, who has been very successful within the system, M. Toscan du Plantier, wrote recently, "It will be necessary," he writes in his book *Donnez-nous Notre Quotidien*, for the press to move that way, but it will not take place without a hard fight, because neither the government, nor the owners are more ready today than yesterday to abandon their control of information." The federation of Editors' Associations has never had any illusions in this regard. This is why it immediately did its best to enlighten public opinion and the members of parliament about the fundamental value of the independence and the quality of information which was at stake. Quickly it strove to convince the journalists' unions that there was no other way—to ensure that the profession would be understood and respected—than to organize for the unity and solidarity of journalists.

It needed to succeed in the 1972 battle in which the takeover of the great Resistance newspaper, *Paris-Normandie*, was made by a businessman of whom the least one can say was that he was not of the same mind. The editors of *Paris-Normandie*, directed by their Editors' Association, strove desperately to oppose this blatantly illegal takeover that allowed only the cowardice of some, the venality of others and the betrayal of the spirit of the Resistance by the majority of stockholders. For the first time, the Federation of Editors' Associations was aided, not only by the French Federation of Journalists' Associations, but also by the Union of French Journalists (CFDT)—whose open and energetic president, Paul Parisot, at once assumed the combative stance that he had taken against M. Hersant—by the Union of Journalists (FO), and finally by the National Union of Journalists (SNJ) when Denis Perier-Daville, founder of the Editors' Association of *Le Figaro*, became the president.

This battle, which scared M. Hersant into accepting some weak agreements concerning control and participation by journalists, which he soon violated and then disavowed, failed mostly due to the misunderstanding of press workers (linotypists, typesetters and press men) and some journalists of the CGT union who are paying dearly today for their previous lack of determination and lucidity. It certainly reinforced the conviction of the French Federation of Journalists' Associations that there was no other path to follow.

This is why, the following year, at the time of the Senate Colloquium, the French Federation of Journalists' Associations demanded and obtained from the SNJ, CFDT and FO unions the formation of a liaison committee, responsible for coordinating the efforts of all the journalistic organizations which ratified the colloquium decisions or

supported them afterwards, such as the CGT union. The committee did what it could, but experience has shown that it lacked the jurisdiction, the authority and the means necessary for it to be really effective. And it will always be this way, as long as all the representative journalistic organizations do not constitute a single force, mutually responsible and determined, that will respect their profession.

The French federation invited all unions to form a single front in a letter dated May 25, 1974, to which only the CFDT and CGT responded positively. Renewing its efforts, the federation convinced the unions to convene a new colloquium at Bierville, on the one hand to define and improve the doctrine formulated in 1973 during the preceding Senate Colloquium (parallelling the specific rights of journalists, the rights of all salaried employees of press enterprises represented by the enterprise committee were proclaimed), on the other hand, to take a position on a report presented by the federation president entitled "The Crisis of the Press and the Powerlessness of Journalists. How to solve it?"

This very circumstantial report contained a new and very strong appeal to all unions and journalistic organizations to create a commission composed of the representatives of each group present at Bierville and responsible for submitting to them:

1) a project of an action and liaison committee of the profession (which we call the committee of public safety) whose composition, powers and obligations would be rigorously defined and respected by each group;

2) a program of action initiated by the action and liaison committee, which would have the power and the means to pursue its realization under the control of the journalistic groups, and which would aim at compelling the owners and the government to take their proposals into consideration.

Unfortunately, this appeal was not heard. Visibly anxious about becoming involved in a way that might compromise their sovereignty and their monopoly over journalistic representation, the unions evaded the issue.

It appears clear today that in France as in all other Western countries which claim solemnly and falsely most of the time to have freedom of the press, that in reality is the freedom of the newspaper owners—a handful of men—to direct as they see fit and without any mandate, the information of millions of their fellow citizens, the vast majority of journalists are not ready to fight against this autocratic control and, in fact, do not have the means to win the battle. Most of them lack the determination, the willingness to risk their positions and

above all the spirit of unity and solidarity which would be indispensable in such a confrontation. Like all their compatriots who denounce the obstacles and the status quo in their respective professions, French journalists certainly want changes, but only on the condition that they will not have to make any effort or sacrifice.

As for the unions, torn by their rivalries and internal quarrels, they are still weakened by extremism, self-deception and bureaucratic mentality manifested in many of their leaders. The violence of their verbiage is thus contrasted with the weakness of their action. From this perspective, both the owners and the journalists share the responsibility for the grave crisis in the French press today.

Does this mean that the leaders of countries with authoritarian regimes and the press lords in the so-called liberal Western countries, aided by the established authorities, will indefinitely prevent the citizens of the world from asserting their rights and from controlling with the aid of independent and competent journalists, the resources of information? It is certainly true that authentic press reform, responding to the rights of information and expression of all citizens, will not be possible until the day when public opinion demands that reform take place. But the day is soon approaching when the public will have acquired the maturity and the spirit of responsibility which it lacks today, due to the endless mediocrity of most of the mass media. The contradictions and difficulties that the big press and French society as a whole encounter today, and which are destined to be prolonged and aggravated because of obstacles particular to each one, are beginning to provoke an evolution in spirit. In the not too distant future, one can predict that the great majority of citizens will realize that social peace and general prosperity of each person are closely linked and that they require the existence and the consolidation of a true democracy; that is to say, a democracy that extends into the social and economic domains and relies on an independent press, opening its pages to all citizens and to all problems.

Then the informers can depend on a public that wants to be seriously informed and, in the midst of their own enterprises, on their colleagues, fellow workers, employees and groups, they will know how to interest in creating an independent and democratic press, and in making them their allies and partners.

It will become possible to overcome the collusion between press lords and political leaders who are hardly worried about the abuses of the right of property, privileges and the power of money.

Looking forward to this day, the French Federation of Journalists' Associations has proposed and supports without reservations the for-

mation of a Comité des Sages, composed of two academics and a politician, whose competence, honesty and independence are beyond question. Its composition puts this committee in a position to convince all interested parties in press activities—journalists, groups, employees, press workers, directors and owners, without forgetting the specialists and elected representatives, at least those interested in communication and information issues—to participate in 1976 in a joint consideration of the future of the press. In other words, an examination of the need to make structural reforms that assure, as much as possible, the independence of general information newspapers based on close cooperation (consultations and mutual responsibility) on the one hand, between the directors and the editorial staffs, and on the other between the newspapers and their readers, without forgetting the rapport which must be established among all press workers.

Preface (1968)

INFORMATION PLAYS a key role in modern democracies. To a great extent the worth of a society and the government it chooses depends on the quality, the independence, and the objectivity of its print and broadcast media. More and more it is being realized that information is a kind of public commodity, hence that newspaper, radio and television companies should no longer be tied exclusively or even principally to the profit motive, as other commercial enterprises are.

Certainly the production and circulation of information are industrial and commercial activities; as such, they cannot ignore economic laws and technical requirements. Nevertheless, the fact remains that information enterprises perform a mission which is in the public interest. This mission is so important that if it cannot be fully and properly carried out within the framework of existing commercial structures, it will be necessary to revise the structures as quickly as possible—that is to say, to improve them—or to devise new structures.

This is what impels journalists to unite and to organize "house" associations: organizations through which journalists participate in the management of media enterprises. These "house" associations, which multiplied among newspapers in the provinces and in Paris between 1965 and 1969 are not trying to overthrow classical commercial structures; they simply propose to adapt them to the very special and important mission of journalism—specifically, to ensure for the journalists' associations a more than negligible property share of the company in exchange for their professional competence and the responsibilities they assume. In their opinion, there is no more effective means of guaranteeing the independence of an enterprise which is subject to all sorts of outside pressures and influences. Above all, there is no more effective means of guaranteeing the individual independence of each of the journalists—an independence which is the first prerequisite to reliable information.

This new point of view is becoming increasingly appealing as control of the press is concentrated into fewer and fewer hands. Journalists are the direct—and the first—victims of this concentration. Up to now many have scarcely contemplated the implications of how they

are suddenly obliged to do so. For this concentration of ownership of the press means that more than ever those who dispense the information indispensable to a free society are closely dependent, as employees, on political power, and even more on commercial companies controlled by huge private interests or powerful financial groups. Lamennais' famous remark of 1848 is as true now as it was when he made it, perhaps even more so. "Today," he said, "one must have gold, lots of gold, to enjoy the right to speak: we aren't rich enough; silence to the poor!"

The journalists' associations have grown out of a movement to awaken public opinion and convince citizens of the necessity to transform structures which make private interests in the press too dominant over the general interest. This is not to say that the journalists are systematically questioning the capitalist system under which power in the economic field is based on property. But they point out that in most cases it is no longer property which holds the power in large business firms: practically speaking, the power is now in the hands of extremely small minorities who ensure and prolong their control by taking over the right to choose their collaborators and successors. Hence the rights of these directors do not stem from capitalist democracy, which is no longer more than a façade; their rights instead are founded on their competence as leaders and technicians—a valid claim to power, but not a sufficient one.

By these means real feudal structures have been built up in big business firms. These structures—in the hands of technicians of finance, commerce, and industry—are in practice hardly genuinely responsible to anybody, although they manage interests which are often considerable and sometimes national or multinational in scope. Such an arrangement cannot last forever. In the companies which publish newspapers or run radio or television stations, much more than in the others, there is an increasingly urgent need for such authority to be given a more legitimate basis through the participation of the persons who collect and edit the information presented and who in the audience's mind are responsible for it.

Only if the journalists, as a group, have a share in the property of press, radio, and television firms—a share which permits them to participate in the election of directors, in the supervision of their activities, and the making of major decisions affecting their future and that of the enterprise—can the indispensable element be restored which is wanting today in most information enterprises. Only such collective participation can guarantee that the requirements of quality and independence will prevail over considerations of profit. Only such

participation can contribute substantially to giving journalists the independence and dignity to which they aspire, and which are now compromised more often by pressures from within the firms for which they work than by pressures from outside.

The truth is that the freedom of the press so often invoked by newspaper publishers in seminars, conventions, and banquets is really freedom to manage their affairs as they see fit. To them, it does not at all mean what it ought to mean: the strict independence of their collaborators and a constant increase in the multiplicity of ideas and opinions.

It is clear that the time has come to reconsider the structure of the press. This should be the subject of a national debate. No newspaper reader, no radio listener, no television viewer can escape such a debate. Everyone must understand now what is at stake, the extreme seriousness, the great importance, of the battle which is going to be fought. What is at stake is nothing less than the freedom of the people, the progress of the society in which they live, and ultimately the peace and security of all.

I
The Importance of Information In Modern Society

THINKERS AND scholars are unanimous in demanding information of a high standard. Jurists, publicists, sociologists, economists, philosophers constantly keep reminding us of the need. Indeed, one of the most distressing aspects of our time is the "under-information" of the masses, resulting not only from the notorious inadequacy of education in most countries but from a general deficiency of the information media, whose technical possibilities, although considerable, are literally wasted.

Even politicians in power and religious authorities, who so often in the past have denounced the dangers of freedom of opinion and of the press, today affirm the importance of free information and stress the considerable responsibilities of journalists. This development is all the more significant because the general tendency of those who govern, whoever they may be, has always been to be suspicious of a press which is liable to contest their actions, their doctrine, and sometimes even the foundations of their legitimacy. It is true that when those in power talk about the responsibilities of journalists, they most often mean that the latter should discipline themselves and, above all, be attentive to the requirements of reasons of State—reasons which in the past have justified the worst abuses. But it is a good thing in any case that this great responsibility of journalists—which consists essentially of establishing and proclaiming the facts in any realm—is recognized by all politicians, whether in power or in the opposition, even when they praise freedom of information without practicing it themselves.

The fact which is most surprising—and distressing—is the ease with which most citizens content themselves with their country's press, radio, and television. That this should be true even of company directors and executives in industry, commerce, economy, and finance is scarcely understandable. For these are the people who have learned that information cannot be treated lightly, that it is no longer possible to manage a company and ensure its success without having accurate

information concerning all the factors involved, whether these be technical, commercial, financial, or even social, political or psychological. Nowadays nobody bases manufacturing or distribution on guesswork, but on exhaustive study of markets and detailed calculations concerning costs and the prospects for expansion.

How does it happen that experts who are so precise and demanding where their professional activity is concerned are content to be informed haphazardly and "on the run" when it comes to the vital questions they face as citizens—peace, freedom, security, justice, progress? How are they able to swallow without protest information which is so often fragmentary and tendentious and which is distributed to them by companies they know nothing about? Why don't they demand that these companies, and the directors of these companies, meet the strict requirements of competence and honesty which should be essential for a very special type of product whose value is based almost entirely on the talent and courage of the journalists in charge of collecting and presenting information?

They know perfectly well that in a world where everything can be bought, there are a considerable number of people who are ready to use their power or their money to prevent the divulging of facts which would embarrass them or run counter to their interests. They know, too, that even people whose thinking is not influenced by their own immediate interests often have their judgment warped by ignorance or deeply ingrained prejudice. Public opinion ought to demand guarantees as to the intellectual and moral qualifications of the men who are put in charge—or take charge—of providing information for a whole people.

This very general indifference to—not to say lack of understanding of—the serious issues associated with information in modern times is all the more astonishing in countries like France or the United States, where people well understand the importance of high-quality education and skilled teachers. What is at stake is not only their children's professional and material future but also—in the eyes of parents who try to be educators—their future role as citizens. But is not information really the education of adults? A form of education which continues after the school years, which deals with the important facts of the present, with the changes taking place in ways of living and thinking, with the adaptations that are necessary, with the conditions under which humans can most fully realize their possibilities, and with the maintenance of peace among them?

To inform adults, to provide food for the reflection they need to undertake, there are of course books. But, as Lucien Guissard quite

correctly pointed out in *Presse-Actualité*: "We know by experience that books which lead to reflection have a rather limited sale. What is most read is the press and all that is connected with it." As Pope Paul stated in a speech on March 2, 1963: "The newspaper holds classes every day on all the events in the world to people who are ripe, who are responsible; its influence is imponderable but immense, proportionate to the journalist's force of persuasion and to the number of readers. It is a formidable phenomenon....It is no longer permissable to live today without having one's thought continually nourished and brought up to date on the history we are living and preparing."

It is absolutely certain that information circulated by a press which is really free and conscious of its mission is, today more than ever, an indispensable condition of freedom and democracy. Prof. André Hauriou, in *Constitutional Law and Political Institutions*, has pointed out that the dialogue between power and freedom, which has been opened practically nowhere except in the Western countries, never really took on any breadth until printing made it possible for larger and larger segments of the population to participate in political life. Now, he says, the classical balance in the Western democracies—the balance between the power of the state and the freedom of the citizens—is threatened by the phenomenon of the "over-developed society." That is, there is an overall growth of power, ("Every modern government has the means to put the whole nation at the mercy of the administration and the police, thanks to punch cards, electronic computing, and other recent techniques"); a centralization of power (through central planning and the invasion by technology of political and administrative life), and the hypertrophy of the executive to the detriment of a parliament which, alone, now cannot longer supervise the Government.

In Western societies, public life tends more and more to be dominated by problems of production, distribution, standards of living, prices, wages, and income. Either because of the increasingly technical character of these problems or because of the secrecy by the administrations or corporations which consider it one of their privileges as managers of the economy, citizens risk being deprived of all participation in this management and totally disarmed in the face of the masters (public and private) of the economy. (Not to mention the danger represented by the computers themselves. There is an increasing risk that decisions will pass out of the hands of the elected leaders and into those of the experts who feed information into the machines and, at the same time, interpret the answers they provide and carry out the solutions they suggest.)

This does not mean that the purpose of information dissemination

is to criticize systematically. Good reporting tries to convey to citizens all the interesting facts, whether or not they are favorable to the Government or to anyone else. It is a real violation of liberty and democracy to conceal or distort facts and decisions which are favorable to a ruling power. Not only because, in a democratic system, that power has been elected by the majority of the citizens but also because the State, too, may be a factor for freedom and democracy, by breaking up feudal economic structures and coalitions of private interests which try to turn the workings of the Administration, economy, and finance to their own profit. The State has a right to the understanding and support of journalists in their role of protecting the citizens. In return, the State should provide journalists with all the information that concerns its citizens and permit them to take an active part in the country's development. Obviously there can be no democracy without this participation.

Journalists also help citizens to carry out the mass participation which is a condition of democracy by being interpreters of public opinion. (Parliament plays the same role, and one aspect of the journalist's work must be to make the role of Parliament understandable and to clarify the conditions under which it can function effectively.)

Free and impartial information is a necessary condition not only of freedom and democracy but also of progress, culture and civilization. In science everyone understands that no progress can stem from error and that facts cannot be distorted. The necessities of commercial, political, and military competition have finally also obliged even the most ideological governments to allow their scientists the greatest freedom of information and research. The question is one of life or death for the countries concerned—as Stalin himself eventually had to realize. Such is the considerable advantage that scientists have today over other intellectuals, even though they know the frustration of financial barriers, and their discoveries are sometimes hidden under a bushel. This comparative freedom has been one of the principal reasons for the gigantic advances in science.

On the other hand there are the humanistic studies—the social and political sciences. They have a vital role to play in the identification, the analysis, and understanding of the human and social problems caused by the rapid progress of science and technology. Yet they have fallen behind. Here the press, to the extent that it does not focus on the most important facts or continually question the decisions or point out the shortcomings of the various power centers, bears a great responsibility. It is dialogue, constant questioning, a continuous search for the truth that has built the grandeur of Western civilization and permitted

immense progress in the human condition. This dialogue, this questioning, this search for the truth must be pursued by journalists for and with their readers.

(Facts are generally nonconformist, not to say revolutionary, to the extent that they disturb habits and jeopardize interests. Of course those whose habits are disturbed or whose interests are threatened try to postpone if not prevent the dissemination of these facts and to distort their meaning. Obviously the general interest then suffers. This cannot fail, in international competition, to handicap the peoples who are its victims.)

In other words, instead of taking people's minds off public matters, the press should renew people's interest in them. It is up to journalists to turn the spotlight insistently on the failures of society, so that their readers and auditors can understand that they have a responsibility for helping remedy these failures.

Finally, reporting and interpretation worthy of the name should be the best means of contributing effectively to the maintenance of and strengthening of peace. Only if public opinion in the various nations is seriously informed by independent men who try to be objective and are deeply convinced of their responsibilities can there be a break in the vicious circle of a mad nuclear weapons race that threatens to wipe out the world. Even so-called classical armaments have now acquired such destructive force that their use by countries which can afford them amounts to a sort of genocide, since in modern conflicts traditional armies cannot distinguish between their guerrilla opponents and civilians. Such is the spectacle offered by the war in Vietnam.

Never has it been so essential to provide analysis in depth of the economic, social, racial, political, and ideological factors underlying tension in the world. Never has it been so necessary as now—when the gap between the standards of living of the various populations of the world is increasing to drastically revise prevailing philosophical and legal principles (especially that of state sovereignty).

All this implies great independence of mind, and also material freedom from pressures exerted not only by people in government, who are so often tempted to create a warlike or chauvinistic climate to escape domestic embarrassments, but also by powerful economic forces which are likewise inclined to confuse the national interest with their own. If journalists were more independent of political power and of the forces of money, they more readily could furnish information corresponding to the general interest.

No one can truly inform unless he begins with a certain conception of man, of his needs, rights, and responsibilities, especially when it

comes to peace and social justice. Otherwise, how can a journalist choose from the enormous mass of raw facts? If he does not make such a choice, he does not inform, he dis-informs his readers or listeners by flooding them with information devoid of all interest, and depriving them of that which would give them an insight into other men. This does not mean that information should be guided exclusively by considerations of morals and public affairs. But it does mean having the greatest respect for the facts, not keeping silent about any of them, and not misrepresenting any of the problems that men need to know about in order better to ensure their own future and promote peace and social justice.

How many newspapers tell their readers what they need to know about the problem of underdevelopment and the frightening trend which is leading the undeveloped countries to become poorer and poorer, in spite of the aid given to them by the industrial nations, while the rich countries are becoming ever richer? How many trouble their readers' peace of mind by calling attention, day after day, with photographs and documents, to the scandalous fact that about two-thirds of the human race is hungry, and that the number of the hungry is continually increasing? Yet this is the fact. Three and a half million human beings die of hunger every year, 500 million children are underfed, two billion of the three billion humans on earth suffer from malnutrition. The world food situation has never been so critical. This threat of famine, this widening gap between the developed countries and the others, is the gravest danger for peace.

All specialists know that in reality the aid of the developed countries to the "third world" is negligible, that it does not even amount to .30 per cent of the revenue of the donor countries and that, far from increasing, it is tending to decrease. Most Westerners are also unaware that this aid—roughly $10 billion annually—is more than canceled out by the interest which the undeveloped countries are paying on loans, by the capital surreptitiously exported by their own moneyed classes for investment in Europe and America (in reality it is these people who most benefit by foreign aid), and by the constant degradation of the terms of exchange, which means that the exports of the underdeveloped countries are constantly shrinking in value while their imports from industrialized countries are more and more expensive.

Against this $10 billion in aid, the nations of the world do not hesitate to spend between $250 billion and $300 billion a year for armaments which, far from strengthening their security, every year compromise it further. How many newspapers denounce this senseless waste, this nuclear folly, this armaments race which is particularly

scandalous—as are likewise the huge expenditures caused by the exploration of the moon—at a time when famine is spreading in the world and the underdevelopment of the greater part of humanity is getting steadily worse?

Most of the journalists in the world are not independent. In the East, they are under the more or less close control of their governments. (This is also the case with certain Western journalists, like those at the French national radio-television network.) In the West, journalists are dependent on the owners or managers or editors of newspapers or private radio or television stations. These men generally do not permit their collaborators to write or say things that do not somewhat correspond to their own ideas or feelings. Most of them have uppermost in their mind the consideration of profit. Consequently they try to win and hold readers either by calming and reassuring them or by exciting them with huge alarmist headlines. Thus, on the whole neither the government-controlled press of the East nor the commercial press of the West genuinely serves the right of all citizens to be properly informed.

This right—the right to information—must now be considered one of the basic human rights, like the right to education or the right to health. The right to information is not yet recognized on the statute books. But it is bound to be recognized in the near future because of the gradual evolution of the somewhat formal liberal democracy of an earlier day into a social democracy in which individual rights are, more and more, supplemented by social rights.

As a corollary of this right, the time is near when it will be considered unthinkable for information to be controlled by private interests and governed by the demands of advertising. It is an aberration that the mission of information—a mission of public service—should be carried out by commercial enterprises. The natural objective of these firms is profit, and their natural tendency to concentration is gradually imparting to them the monopolistic forms that are the negation of the diversity that they should provide.

How can this right to information be made a reality through "services in the general interest" that will depend neither on government nor money? That is the root problem to which this book is addressed.

II
A Commercial Press

NEITHER IN France nor in most non-communist countries does the press have a special legal status. Information is considered a commodity, and any citizen, if he has sufficient capital, may sell information as he may sell sausages, vacuum cleaners, or toilet water. To operate a newspaper, he need produce no diploma nor any other guarantee of special competence. The mere fact of starting and running a newspaper gives him status as a journalist, whereas this status is not granted to those who write under his orders until a long probationary period has furnished evidence of their ability as informants and writers.

It does happen, certainly, that some owners and editors of newspapers are real journalists. Fortunately, there are a number who are convinced of the importance of the role they have assumed and who are completely devoted to their task. But they are exceptions fated to become rarer and rarer with the disappearance of, in France, the leaders who took the press in hand after the liberation, and in England and the United States, the independent local family publisher. They are exceptions for the very simple reason that in the "free world" the mission of information is carried out by commercial companies controlled like any other form of private property and subject to the laws of profit and competition. No matter how good the intentions that prevail at the start, these laws inevitably carry the day against the requirements of the mission of information.

The law of trade is that sales must constantly be increased so that fixed overhead can be spread over an ever greater number of products and thus be reduced. Newspapers must sell more and more not only to increase receipts from the sales themselves but above all because only large circulation figures attract advertisers and enable a newspaper to have advertising revenues that will cover its operating deficit and generate a profit. Hence in the nature of things, it must be repeated, financial considerations have a tendency to outweigh the information mission in commercial newspapers. The financiers and administrators soon come to prevail over the editor-in-chief. Even if the man who has

the final say (the manager or chairman of the board) is a journalist, he does not long resist the arguments of his non-journalist collaborators. Unless he wants to see the newspaper disappear or simply vegetate, he must accept the rules of the commercial system. He is condemned to see expansion, even to practice imperialism, so as not to be the victim, but the beneficiary, of the concentration that is enveloping the press.

The result is that the directors of the present-day press have their eyes fixed first of all on sales and advertising figures. It is hard to blame them, since one of their first responsibilities as is the case in any commercial company is to ensure their newspaper's survival and their employees' jobs. But what comes to prevail is not the desire to inform, and, through informing, to educate readers in one special field or many; it is the concern for selling papers. How could things be otherwise? To earn the profits needed to finance the heavy investments required if you are going to swallow competitors and not be swallowed yourself, you must sell more and more. Once in the race, you can't get out. Even those who in their youth dreamed of "tough and honest" journalism begin to make concessions, sometimes without even realizing it. These concessions all involve methods designed to win a maximum of readers and thus to obtain the circulation figures necessary to attract advertisers. Among them are the following:

a. *The search for the sensational.*

By arousing fear, by exciting nationalist or racist feelings—if only on the occasion of a sporting event—by sparking hatred against all who are "different" from the average reader (this is the case with all minorities), a newspaper publisher has a much better chance of booming sales than if he invites his readers to reflect and to understand their neighbors. The systematic search for the sensational is the direct opposite of the first mission of the press: the political and social education of its readers through information of a really high standard.

b. *The concern not to shock readers' habits and prejudices.*

Since maximum sales are needed to get a large share of advertising, a maximum number of readers or radio listeners are required. To please them, it is important to keep silent about anything that might annoy, disturb, or irritate them, or, in general give them a bad conscience. Complete reports might show up the shortcomings or mistakes of some groups within their readership. As a result there might even be demands that the groups make amends or that there be sanctions which would be violently opposed by those who felt their interests threatened.

But it is not only readers that newspapers must take care not to set against them in this way; it is also advertisers. Especially those who

count the most: the big firms or powerful economic groups whose decision to cancel an advertising contract would be a heavy blow. Does this mean that the big advertisers can impose their own "line" or, more often, oblige the media to keep silent about a specific fact? This is far from being the rule, although cases of pressure can be cited. The truth is that such pressure is usually not necessary, for, as Jacques Kayser has written in *Mort d'une Liberté*, "The interest of the advertisers, who mostly belong to the world of big business, is of the same nature as that of the newspaper owners, who are also in big business...."

Although they announce loudly their independence where governments are concerned, and contrast it with the sad slavery of the press controlled by the State or the Party in the socialist countries of the East, most present-day newspapers wear gloves when they spar with the administration in power. The Government, or more exactly the State, is the dispenser of a number of economic and tax advantages, in the form of exemptions. At the limit it can, in France, seize the newspapers as they come off the presses; even when such seizures are illegal, as is most often the case, they can strike a fatal blow to newspapers that are already in financial straits.

In the end, through their desire to shock nobody and to please everybody, the commercial newspapers, like the private radio and television stations, usually refrain from taking a strong position on economic and political problems. They are apolitical. As Alfred Sauvy notes in his *Mythology of Our Time*, "Since the Liberation, most of the provincial newspapers, in order to stay in business, have had not only to play down their [political] doctrine considerably but also to reduce the space devoted to purely political news." He concludes: "To be apolitical leads naturally to great sympathy for the conservative side."

c. *Increased space given to "human interest" and entertainment.*

It is generally recognized that the press has the threefold mission of informing, educating, and entertaining; this triple mission is also that of radio and television. But, accurate and serious information, which sheds the light of truth on all things in all fields, can be unbearable for certain types of readers. Education is boring. To satisfy the need to escape, to let go, to experience without risk the emotions one does not feel in one's own life, newspapers give a very large amount of space to "human interest" stories, particularly if they involve violence or eroticism. Disproportionate importance is also given to the doings of the great of this world—kings and financiers, screen stars, sports champions, and popular singers—who are held up for the envy if not the admiration of the multitudes.

This is not to condemn the reporting of human interest stories,

which make people conscious of one another as human beings. But as journalist Bernard Feron writes in a book significantly titled *The Late Free Press*: "Unfortunately, what ought to be merely secondary soon fills up all the space. The entertainment power of the press then becomes anesthesia."

Outside of *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *France Soir*, and a few weeklies, no French newspapers, however powerful and rich they may be, maintain foreign correspondents; if there are any, it is rarely more than one. The special correspondents sent by provincial newspapers to big diplomatic conferences or on trips abroad by the president, the prime minister, or the minister of foreign affairs, can usually be counted on the fingers of one hand.

In other fields it is the same. There are only a very few economic journalists, or journalists specializing in labor questions, worthy of the name. Indeed, why should the commercial press go to the trouble of hiring such men? They would have to be decently paid, as are highly qualified personnel in other professions, and their natural propensity is to get interested in all the aspects of the problems they have to deal with. This would risk raising all sorts of questions likely to get the editors and owners of their papers into trouble with readers, advertisers, or the Government.

For most newspapers, journalists are nothing more than technicians specializing in layout or in the presentation of agency dispatches or of the local, regional agricultural, or commercial news furnished by interested parties, public or private. This is about all that is asked of them, except for the reporters who deal with human interest, art, and sports. But everything that is political, diplomatic, economic, or social—everything that concerns the citizens' future, their freedom, their security, their progress, the important decisions of the nation—all this is in the hands of the editor, from whose decisions there is no appeal. Which means that all news on these important subjects is treated as neutrally as possible, when it is not simply skipped. On occasion, however, the paper's columns are opened to politicians, well-known writers, or even, if the nature of the news requires it, to a distinguished scientist, economist, labor union leader, or the head of an employer guild. There is no attempt at providing continuity.

Advertising—we always get back to that. Big newspapers in France derive 50 to 80 per cent of their income from advertising. Since this advertising goes to the most-read newspapers (and most listened-to private radio stations) and to those whose readers have the highest purchasing power, it enriches the strong and puts the weak at a further disadvantage, and hence is one of the chief causes of concentration of

ownership. Gradually the small newspapers, whose receipts are insufficient to cover their printing and distribution costs, are obliged to sell out to the big ones.

In a study published in 1965 in *Presse-Actualité*, Yves L'Her notes: "In Paris 79 dailies were published in 1892, 57 in 1914, 31 in 1936, 28 in 1945, 13 in 1963. France had 203 dailies in 1945 but only 106 in 1962. Today this figure has fallen below 100. In 1892 69 provincial towns had more than one daily; in 1962, only 17 had more than one." A recent work (*La Presse Quotidienne Francaise* by Emmanuel Derieux and Jean C. Texier, Armand Colin, 1974) points out that the number of general information dailies in Paris has declined to ten; they are: *L'Aurore*, *Combat*, *Le Figaro*, *L'Humanité*, *Libération*, *La Nation* and *Le Parisien Libéré*, morning newspapers; *La Croix*, *France-Soir* and *Le Monde*, afternoon newspapers. Since then *La Nation*, the Gaullist newspaper, has folded and the prospects are not good for *Combat*, whose owner-director, who had succeeded in guiding the publication through good times and bad times, died in July of 1974. On the other hand, a new newspaper, *Quotidien de Paris*, appeared April 4, 1974, headed by Philippe Tesson, the former editor-in-chief of *Combat*. In addition to the general information dailies, there are four specialized newspapers: *Les Echos*, *L'Equipe*, *Le Quotidien du Médecin* and *Le Nouveau Journal*.

The same work says that in the provinces, where the number of general information dailies has fallen from 175 in 1946 to 80 in 1973, there are no more than eight cities today with more than one daily. Also, the above mentioned issue of *Presse-Actualité* lists the principal newspaper groups that now exist in France—a "group" being defined as "a series of titles controlled by the same financial power, which may be a man, a company, or a group of companies controlled by one person whose influence is predominant on the boards of directors." He cites the Hachette group, which controls a large number of properties including *France-Soir*, *Paris Presse*, *Elle*, *Confidences*, *Télé-7 Jours*, *Réalités*, etc., and, in addition, holds 49 per cent of the shares in the Nouvelles Messageries Parisiennes, the principal newspaper distribution agency; the Provost group (*Paris-Match*, *Marie-Claire*, *Le Figaro*); the Amaury group (*Le Parisien libéré*, *l'Equipe*, *Carrefour*, *Marie-France*, *Le Courrier de l'Ouest*); the Del Duca group, the Hersant group, the Maison de la Bonne Presse, la Vie catholique, the Dassault group, the Boussac group, the Editions Montsouris, the Dargaud group, etc.

This phenomenon of concentration affects all industrial countries. In England, 67 per cent of readers buy newspapers published by three big chains, while the rest buy from 41 independent companies. In Germany, according to *Der Spiegel*, the group controlled by Axel

Springer published 5 dailies, 8 weeklies, 5 monthlies or periodicals—which, together, have a total circulation of more than 16 million copies, including 8 million newspapers a day. This last figure represents 40.7 per cent of the total circulation of German dailies. The trend has been the same in the United States.

More and more this concentration makes money the master of the press and broadcasting. As early as 1848, Louis Blanc told the French National Assembly: "The concentration of the press is not only dangerous for those who are subject to its power; it is corrupting for those who exercise it." And it is true that so much influence and so much money in the same hands are not propitious to an understanding of the needs and cares of the common man, nor to an understanding of modern imperatives.

How far this commercial press has come from that which preceded it in the nineteenth century, and in which men like Benjamin Constant, Paul-Louis Courier, Armand Carrel, Royer-Collard and Chateaubriand distinguished themselves—men who firmly believed in the nobility of their professions and who never stopped struggling against abuses of power and for real freedom of the press!

The present concentration of the press is anachronistic—a paradox and a defiance of democratic principles and of the spirit of progress. For there is no democracy nor progress without variety. The strange thing is that this situation does not seem a scandal, nor even a cause for surprise or reprobation, to most readers. Yet these same readers can't find words enough to condemn the State-controlled press of the Eastern countries. As listeners and television viewers, they even denounce the tight control which is exercised by the State in France over radio and television.

When will they realize that the control to which the so-called free press is subjected by certain big businessmen and financial powers—commercial advertisers—cannot be defended, either? It may be even less defensible, to the extent that it is at the service of a few big private and commercial interests. For although the State-controlled press is inspired only by the preoccupations of power, still that power, in spite of its errors and abuses, often does try to make the general interests of the nation—as it sees them, at least—prevail over particular interests.

In the Western press, which is obliged to devote itself heavily to entertainment and escape, and whose effect, whether or not its directors are conscious of the fact, is fundamentally depoliticizing, we may look in vain for that systematic concern with information and education which ought to be its obsession, as it ought to be the obsession of radio and television.

III
The Birth of Journalists' Associations

AT THE time of the Liberation of France, the Resistance and the men in power dreamed of a new press, freed from the constraints of money, which would be wholly devoted to the service of man and the general interest of the country. In the Underground, Pierre Brossolette had prepared a report on the press which he personally put into the hands of General de Gaulle, and which unfortunately was never published. In this report, Brossolette contended that it was unthinkable that the post-Liberation press should resemble the prewar press and pointed out the grave responsibility of the newspaper editors and journalists who had continued to ply their trade during the occupation. In a circular known as the "Cahier bleu" ("blue book"), the Secretary for Information of the provisional government, still in Algiers, announced the suspension, pending judgment or dismissal of the charges, of the publication of "all newspapers and periodicals which carried out the orders of the occupying authority." To replace them, the Underground Press Federation proposed that the only newspapers authorized to appear should be those which had been distributed secretly under the occupation and those which had voluntarily ceased publication in order not to appear under German censorship. During the fighting for the liberation of Paris, representatives of newspapers belonging to the Federation began to take over the premises of collaborationist newspapers and to publish their own papers. In the provinces, the insurrection also gave birth to a large number of patriotic newspapers.

"Nothing like this had ever happened in the history of the French press," writes Albert Bayet in *Problems and Techniques of the Press*; "even revolutions had left the newspapers of the old regimes intact, sometimes with the same staff. The innovation of the French Resistance was to drop this habit. The Resistance wanted to mark in unmistakable fashion the break between the Vichy regime and the liberation: for a new regime, there would be a new press."

A report drawn up secretly during the occupation said: "Under

whatever economic regime we may live—if it does not do away with the power of money—the press must be made an island bristling with defenses against corruption, an island whose inhabitants may have different and perhaps even opposing ideas, but who will be able, with a conscience freed from all links to material interests, freely to light the roads along which French politics will travel." An official document of the National Press Federation (as the Underground Press Federation had now come to be called) is even more explicit, and clearly shows its members' will to free the press from the great law of commercial companies—profit. On November 24, 1945, the members of the Federation adopted a "draft declaration on the rights and responsibilities of a free press", of which the first three articles stated:

"Article 1: *The press is not an instrument for commercial profit. It is an instrument for culture; its mission is to give accurate information, to defend ideas, to serve the cause of human progress.*

"Article 2: *The press can fulfill its mission only in freedom and through freedom.*

"Article 3: *The press is free when it does not depend either on governmental power or on the power of money, but only on the conscience of journalists and readers.*"

A few months before, on March 7, 1945, Francisque Gay, press officer in the Information Secretariat, had stated: "There is one point on which, in the underground, we all agreed. That is that the country must never again have a press subjected to the domination of money." A little later, in August, he was to speak of "the admirable revolution that has taken place in the press."

Immediately after the Liberation, the first measures concerning the press adopted as part of the national recovery program furthered the idea of a thorough reform. These included the suspension of the former newspapers and the provisional establishment of new ones, pending the enactment—expected imminently—of "a coherent body of legislation defining the status of the press." On May 11, 1946, a law was adopted which transferred to the State the property of the newspapers that had been published under the occupation, with a view to turning it over to the new newspapers. The law stipulated, however, that this transfer could not be made until a new press code had been adopted.

In all, five bills were presented. One after another, they were buried by the Press Committee of the National Assembly. The Committee, which included a number of newspaper editors, was dominated by their influence. It is always hard to analyze motives. But there can be no doubt that some of them felt the desire—almost a natural reflex—to

remain masters and owners of the new newspapers under the same conditions as had prevailed before the war. Other founders and directors of the new newspapers were quite honestly afraid that a press code might destroy the delicate balance they had succeeded in establishing in their papers. They may have feared that such a code might give the State a right of supervision which would be dangerous for the freedom of the press. They were not particularly concerned with strengthening the position and the freedom of expression of their lesser-known colleagues. Since they themselves, by a stroke of fate, held control of the newspapers or at least of their important sections—domestic politics, diplomacy, economics—they considered that the important information was in good hands.

The result of this lack of legislation was uncertainty and discontent in the press—made worse because owners of prewar newspapers had still received no indemnity for their property, while the new teams were impatient to obtain definite control over the enterprises they had been managing since the Liberation. To end this unhealthy situation, which threatened to persist, a compromise was voted by the National Assembly—the De Moustier Law, adopted August 5, 1954. The Law might have been accompanied by rules reserving the "transferred" property of prewar newspapers to teams presenting certain qualifications and agreeing to fulfill certain conditions. But no distinction was made between Resistance teams which were trying to safeguard their independence, those into which representatives of powerful economic interests had gradually wormed their way, and those, finally, which had come under control of family groups whose only interest was in grabbing all the power and ensuring the continuance of their dynasty.

The die was cast. The newspapers once again became commercial companies, just as they had been before the war. The ideal of the Resistance was betrayed. Intentionally or not, a kind of swindle was carried out at the expense of the nation.

The word is not too strong if one recalls that the press properties had been "transferred," after the Liberation, to a national company, the Societe Nationale des Entreprises de Presse, pending the voting of a statute which was expected to free the press from the control of money and to make it a sort of public service. In the end, the properties of the prewar newspapers, which had considerable value, were simply handed over, without any conditions attached, to the new teams which had been put in charge of exploiting them. So unconditional was this gift that some of the new teams, under pressure of financial necessity or for various other reasons, were able to sell to powerful financial interests the control of the enterprises which had been entrusted to them

by the nation. Such sales were of course a violation of the principles which had guided these teams previously and which had been the justification for the "transfers" made after the Liberation. Other teams, dominated by one or two families, soon came to consider the enterprises entrusted to them as their personal property, transferable to their heirs.

It is hard to accept the loss of the unique opportunity which France had, during the exalting period which immediately followed the Liberation, to transform the legal status of the press in order to make it a public service with the participation of journalists and readers. What is impossible to admit is that enterprises which were the object of quite exceptional measures—they were confiscated and practically nationalized and turned over to certain outstanding persons or groups because of their Resistance record or their exceptional personal worth—may now be considered as personal property. This means that these entrprises may now come unconditionally under the control of anyone at all, without any consideration for his character or intellectual competence. This is exactly the opposite of what was in the minds of the members of the underground press and the legislators of the Liberation period.

It is surprising that after the Liberation so few of the reformers in power realized the danger of going back to the same legal structures that had prevailed for the press. Their appalling failure may have been due, to a great extent, to the fact that new structures would have implied serious limitations on the right of property, at least in its absolute sense. Legislators who were not themselves frightened by a limitation on the right of property in the press feared that, far from being to the advantage of the nation, this limitation might awaken the independence of journalists where the State was concerned. The cure would have been worse than the disease.

Still, it was not totally impossible to prevent the return of the press to the *status quo ante*. Even within the framework of the traditional commercial companies—there were no others—it was not impossible to seek formulas which would have put a brake on mercantile tendencies within the enterprise and could reinforce both the moral and legal power of those whose mission it is to inform their fellow-citizens: the journalists.

One newspaper, under the editorship of an exceptional leader, Hubert Beuve-Mery, was able to organize itself in a way that should permit it to remain independent of both money and power—thanks to the participation, in proportion to their responsibilities, of all who produce it.

Le Monde published its first issue on December 19, 1944—four months after the extraordinary flowering of new newspapers to which the Liberation gave rise. It is probably true—as the weekly *Juvenal* stated on September 7, 1951—that as soon as he arrived in Paris as head of the provisional government, General de Gaulle felt the need of having his foreign policy supported by "a newspaper with a prestige" like that of the prewar daily *Le Temps*. In any event, with the approval of the Ministry of Information and at the insistence of the former editorial staff of *Le Temps*, who wanted to get back to work, *Le Monde* was installed in the old *Le Temps* building and soon began to print on the old presses. The new paper kept practically the same makeup, with its title in Gothic letters and its "foreign policy bulletin" in the left-hand column of the front page. This was a way of recognizing a connection with a newspaper which had enjoyed great authority abroad, just because it had unofficially presented the point of view of the Quai d'Orsay at a time when French influence was predominant in Europe and to a great extent in the world.

For a time it was believed in diplomatic circles that *Le Monde* was still the mouthpiece of the Quai d'Orsay—and, in the beginning, the paper's support of the provisional government's policy seemed to confirm this idea. Members of the succeeding government soon found out, however, that it was false. When he entrusted the editorship of *Le Monde* to M. Beuve-Méry, former Prague correspondent of *Le Temps*, the Minister of Information had chosen not only a very talented journalist, but also a man who had a very high idea of the role of the press.

The history of *Le Monde's* first years is the story of a long struggle to carry out its mission of information and education independently in the face of the material difficulties of the period. It was attacked from all quarters. The first assault came from the extreme left, which accused *Le Monde* of being the heir of *Le Temps* and therefore a tool of the Comite des Forges, the powerful steel trust. This was heartily amusing, since most of the nine partners who had founded *Le Monde* were not wealthy men and the new publishing firm had received from the Government a loan of only a million francs ($20,000)—which was repaid before any of it was even spent. When a paper shortage required all newspapers to reduce consumption by 50 per cent, *Le Monde* was denounced by the Paris Press Syndicate, to which it did not belong, for curtailing the number of copies printed rather than their size. In later years, the paper drew more fire with pleas for armed neutrality for Europe and with increasing reservations toward the French war in Indochina. Some of these attacks and accusations were unfortunately taken up even inside *Le Monde*.

Indeed, it happened that at the same time the most important stockholders of *Le Monde* were denouncing the editor's policy, a rise in the cost of newsprint, wages, and services—largely due to the inflation then prevalent in France—seemed to point to a deficit which the paper would not long be able to bear. Three of the founding partners held the majority of the shares (120 out of 200); Beuve-Méry, editor and manager, who held practically all the power in his hands; René Courtin, a law professor and apostle of European unity; and Christian Funck-Brentano, a faithful Gaullist. These three stockholders, who made up the board of directors of the newspaper, were supposed to represent three of the great spiritual currents in France: Social Catholicism, liberal protestantism, and Gaullism. From the beginning, the three board members found themselves in disagreement. To mark their disagreement, Courtin and Funck-Brentano left the board of directors at the end of December, 1949. The Government in turn became worried about the independence of judgment on the part of the French newspaper most read abroad. Soon stockholders opposed to Beuve-Méry began to hold discussions, with an outsider as referee: Johannes Dupraz, a Popular Republican deputy and former secretary general of the information ministry, who had played an important role in the birth of *Le Monde*.

On April 7, 1951, the stockholders of *Le Monde* decided that the newspaper's policy should be changed and formed a new board, under the chairmanship of Beuve-Méry with participation by the two other former members plus Johannes Depraz. The new board functioned no better than the former one. Beuve-Méry, as before, refused to submit foreign policy articles to it before publication, and Courtin and Funck-Brentano decided to resign and publicly denounce a betrayal of the paper's "vocation." A few days after their statement Beuve-Méry resigned, saying he did not believe that the new and difficult struggle against rising prices, on which the independence of newspapers depended, could be won "if some of our associates fight their own newspaper publicly and violently."

As a result of this letter, the stockholders decided in August to appoint a new manager, to give him a "management council" to assist him, and to establish a committee to set the political line of the newspaper and perform the functions of an editor-in-chief. Its chairman, Johannes Dupraz, was a politician belonging to one of the parties that formed the majority in power. However, neither the editorial staff of *Le Monde* nor its readers accepted the decisions. *Sud-Ouest*, a Bordeaux newspaper, published an open letter to Beuve-Méry asking him to keep his post and suggesting the establishment of readers' and sub-

scribers' committees to support him. Such committees sprang up spontaneously in Paris, Bordeaux, Strasbourg, and Lyons; their membership included high-ranking university officials, magistrates, and the like. The staff's determination was all the stronger because *Le Monde* was a Liberation newspaper and, consequently, the property right of its founders was basically of a moral nature: they had been chosen because of their resistance record or their ability, not because they had provided capital (they had, in fact, provided almost none). Because the journalists themselves ensured the quality and the reputation of the newspaper, they concluded that they, too, had a moral right to a say in its destiny.

Before a stockholders' meeting called to resolve the problem, Beuve-Méry indicated his intention of withdrawing his resignation, and Johannes Dupraz, gave up the idea of presiding over the future editorial committee. The day before the stockholders' meeting, the editorial staff adopted a motion which read in its essential passages as follows:

"The best means of guaranteeing the independence and continuity of the newspaper seems [to the editorial staff] to be to give legal form to its wish to have its right to a share in the ownership of the newspaper recognized; consequently, the editorial staff demands that a study commission, on which it shall be represented, be set up to prepare a plan for a change in the company which would give material form to the participation of the editorial staff in the ownership and management of the newspaper, in the spirit which presided over its foundation. If, as [the editorial staff] believes, the principle [of such participation] is accepted, the editorial staff expresses the desire that no measure concerning the definitive structure of the management be taken without the editorial staff's having been called to share in it as a matter of right.

"Since such a change requires thorough study, the editorial staff suggests the extension of the *status quo* as of today, September 12, 1951, pending the study commission's completion of its task as rapidly as possible. The editorial staff asks to present its point of view at the stockholders' meeting of September 13, 1951, and appoints M. Chênebenoit to represent it at that meeting."

M. Chênebenoit, the managing editor, was in close agreement with the editorial staff and played a key role in the crisis by refusing, through loyalty to the former editor and through personal conviction, to accept several offers of the post of editor.

When stockholders met on September 13, they took no action on the staff appeal and postponed other discussions until the next day.

Before that meeting resumed, the staff met and drew up a new motion stating in part a demand "that the stockholders request the mediation of the President of the Republic in a conflict which directly concerns the interests of the country," and another "that all decisions concerning the structure and the management of the newspaper be suspended."

M. Chênebenoit, two nationally-known writers and journalists, MM. Emile Henriot and Remy Roure, and I were appointed to present the motion to the stockholders. The stockholders listened and told us that they would give an answer that afternoon. MM. Henriot and Roure left, and about six o'clock M. Chênebenoit and I again faced the stockholders, who informed us that they would not accept mediation by the President, which in hindsight probably was fortunate.

Because this was a Saturday and Beuve-Méry and the staff had announced that they would be absent from their desks on Monday, a major crisis seemed unavoidable—one which would have taken on the proportions of a national scandal, in which opinion would not be on the stockholders' side. I then proposed that stockholders extend Beuve-Méry's mandate for three months, and that Beuve-Méry accept this extension. During these three months, the stockholders and the editorial staff would negotiate to find a way in which the staff could become a partner in the company—it being understood that, once it had become a partner (stockholder), the staff would abide by the democratic rules that apply in commercial companies. About nine or ten o'clock Chênebenoit and I were called in to be told that our compromise had been accepted.

Negotiations, between Courtin and manager designate Catrice on the one hand and Chênebenoit and myself on the other, soon produced results: the two representatives of the editorial staff founded an Association of Journalists of *Le Monde*, and the company decided to increase its capital in order to give the Association about 28 per cent of the shares (80 shares out of 280). The staff wanted to own enough shares (a minimum of 25 per cent of the capital) to be able, if necessary, to oppose any extraordinary decisions not regarded as consistent with the quality and dignity of a real information "service." These decisions, which in France require three-quarters of the votes in limited companies and two-thirds in joint-stock companies are the most likely to affect the future of the firm as well as that of the persons who make them.

On December 12, 1951, the general assembly of the company, after discussing the problem of the editorship of the paper, maintained Beuve-Méry in his functions by a vote of 190 votes to 65. The battle for a strict conception of the freedom of the press had been won. At the

time, the significance of this victory may not have been entirely clear. Yet it was rich in promise, some of which is only now becoming clear and will have considerable importance. For the first time, a group of journalists had taken their fate into their own hands and openly affirmed that a newspaper is not simply an economic enterprise like any other, governed only by the rules of commercial law. They had proclaimed the principle that the newspaper must answer, first of all, the requirements of the public service which it ensures: that of supplying information for which the journalists themselves, each in their own fields, bear the intellectual and moral responsibility. This fact, the journalists added, is precisely what distinguishes them from other salaried workers and gives them the moral right to participate in important decisions through holding a share in the property—the aim of such participation being to guarantee and strengthen the newspapers' independence.

The journalists of *Le Monde* largely owed to their editor this realization of their responsibilities and their rights. He had shown that a great newspaper could be published on a strictly independent basis. He thus had given them pride in their newspaper and their profession.

Once the Journalists' Association was able to assume the responsibilities of a co-owner of the company, it found the enterprise to be at a kind of statutory impasse. The original partners, out of concern that *Le Monde* not come under the control of big business, had refused to grant themselves the usual freedom to sell their shares or to bequeath them to heirs, and instead had stipulated that the surviving partners should have a right of pre-emption over the shares of those who died. Unfortunately these arrangements, which did honor to the founders, were incomplete; they did not provide for a legitimate succession to the founders' control as the founders died.

Because of the large investments the paper had been able to make, and the increasing value of its real estate, it was becoming necessary for tax reasons to revalue the shares and increase the capital (which, at the time the paper was founded, had been purely symbolic). The inevitable result of this development would be that the surviving partners would no longer be financially able to exercise their right of pre-emption over the shares of those who died. In that case they would either have to accept the heirs of the deceased as partners—even if the heirs lacked the necessary intellectual and moral qualifications—or they would have to reduce the capital, an inopportune operation and one that would be dangerous, even impossible, to repeat. The partners could always resell the pre-empted shares to an outsider if they all agreed to it, but the outsider would have to be wealthy enough to pay the price of the

shares, whose value was rising steadily. Whether they wanted to or not, the partners would be able to admit as new stockholders only persons of considerable means—a development quite contrary to the spirit in which *Le Monde* was founded.

Obviously the Journalists' Association could not accept such a solution. Its existence and its acts permitted all the partners to prevent it. In 1960 the Journalists' Association of *Le Monde* presented its fellow-stockholders with a plan which it believed provided the elements of a solution to the problem. Not only did it call for an increase in the shares held by the Journalists' Association from 28 per cent to 40 per cent of the total, but it also proposed that 10 per cent should be granted to two new associations—one of the administrative staff of *Le Monde* and the other of its clerical employees. It further proposed that precise rules be drawn for the choice of successors to the other partners.

A new distribution of shares, giving half of the ownership to three associations of persons employed by the paper, seemed to be a most effective means of discouraging any persons or financial group from becoming interested in *Le Monde* for reasons of influence or speculative gains. Devoid of these two attractions, and with half of them owned by associations of a cooperative type which would draw only regular "interest," the shares could retain a low nominal value without objections from the tax collector's office. They could also be acquired by desirable new partners without regard to the financial means of these persons.

In the opinion of the journalists the plan had another advantage: interesting the other categories of staff in the defense of the newspaper's independence and, at the same time, offering a limited example of profit-sharing by employees. This example, they believed, might teach some useful lessons applicable to more general experimentation in France, as several political party platforms were already suggesting. Finally, the plan would bring together, as guarantors of the newspaper's independence and standards, two essential types of partners: the journalists who "make" the paper and assume the intellectual and moral responsibility for the news it publishes, and, on the other hand, persons who, being intensely interested in the mission of the press as a public service, are willing to invest part of their capital without expecting anything more than a normal income from it—in other words, without expecting either speculative profits or the means of satisfying personal ambitions. These men might be considered temporarily as the representatives of the readers of *Le Monde*, and be chosen with this idea in mind; they might be expected to bring to their journalist associates

an indispensable contribution, either because of their own fields of competence or—and this was considered most important—because they would have the opportunity, as partners, of expressing their concerns, their wishes, and their criticism, pending the time when users—readers, auditors, and television viewers—would be directly represented in information enterprises.

It took six years of negotiations for all the partners to reach a general agreement concerning the revision of the statutes of Le Monde, Ltd. Six years is not really a very long time for reaching a consensus on basic and daring changes; changes which radically transform classic structures and point the way to a new type of commercial company adapted to an enterprise that wants to carry out its mission of information in complete freedom.

For a long time, most of the partners saw the journalists' proposals as an unacceptable infringement on their right of property. The managers weighed the legal and fiscal risks at length. Like the editorial staff, Beuve-Méry had wanted to prevent all patrimonialization of the shares, but he was, nevertheless, worried about the risks to internal authority that might arise from increasing the proportion of the property held by journalists, administrators, and employees through their associations. His temperament and the unhappy lessons learned from the turbulent history of the *Le Monde* board of directors predisposed him to fear a development that might lead to the establishment of supervisory bodies, in which he saw a threat to authority. Hence, he was led to propose that a certain number of shares should be given to the managers, as managers, in order to strengthen their position as arbiters among the various shareholders.

Everyone involved, especially Beuve-Méry and the editorial staff, had the same conception of the freedom of the press and considered the press as a public service. (This convergence of views was all the more natural as it was Beuve-Méry who had succeeded in embodying it in *Le Monde*, with the support of all his staff.) In consequence, all the misunderstandings, all the mutual suspicions, were dissipated one after another. In time, the other partners became convinced of the journalists' sense of responsibility. Their association never intervened in the day-to-day management of the paper, and at the time of a difficult decision the partners had not hesitated to give up the opportunity for a distribution of profits to the staff in order to urge the purchase of new presses, which they considered indispensable—as events were to prove. On their side, the journalists learned to appreciate the good intentions and even the impartiality of the other stockholders—for example, on the day when a majority of them

aligned themselves with the Journalists' Association in turning down a proposal to multiply the interest of the shares tenfold.

The agreements reached and put into effect on March 15, 1968, after a unanimous decision by the stockholders, provided for:

1. Redistribution of the capital of the company.

Henceforth to be made up of 1,000 shares distributed as follows:

Journalists' association	400 shares	(40 per cent of the capital)
Administrative staff association	50 shares	(5 per cent)
Clerical staff association	40 shares	(4 per cent)
Founding and co-opted partners	400 shares	(40 per cent)
Managers (as such)	110 shares	(11 per cent

The shares given to managers by virtue of their functions are distributed as follows: 70 shares to the editor-director of the publication and 40 shares to the manager-administrative director. Upon the death of the founding or co-opted partners, the procedure for the transfer of their shares shall be: If their heirs are not accepted by surviving partners representing three-fourths of the capital, a new partner will be chosen by the same qualified majority; only if agreement cannot be reached on a replacement may the surviving partners pre-empt their deceased partners' shares. New co-opted partners will not be allowed to acquire more than 25 per cent of the A shares [shares held by natural persons]—that is, assuming capital of 1,000 shares, no more than 100 shares, unless stockholders representing three-fourths of the capital authorize it.

2. Establishment of a board of individuals, whose mission was to be essentially to advise the management concerning financial policy. This board included, by right, the former managers of the company, the legal representatives of the staff associations (journalists, administrative staff, clerical staff), and a representative of the partners who are natural persons. The president of the Journalists' Association is, by right, chairman.

3. Choice of new partners. In addition to an administrative staff association and a clerical employees' association, five new partners were named to rejuvenate and renew the community of partners of the company.

(M. Chaysson, Ambassador of French in Indonesia; M. Jean-Jacques Beuve-Mery, of the legal services of the European Economic Community; M. Paul Ricoeur, professor of philosophy at the Faculty of Letters and Humanistic Studies of the University of Nanterre; M. Paul Reuter, professor of international law at the Faculty of Law and Economic Sciences of the University of Paris; M. Francois Michel,

engineer, industrialist, and chairman of the board of directors of the book publisher Editions du Cerf. Since then, SARL *Le Monde* has gained three new partners; chronologically, the first one was presented by management: M. Pares, financial director of SNCF (French Railways); the second one by the management and the association of journalists: M. Eugene Descamps, ex-Secretary General of CFDT (the large non-Marxist union); and the third one only by the association of journalists: Mme. Graal who is active in a number of social and private institutions; she is the sole female partner of *Le Monde*).

4. Appointment of two new managers: MM. Jacques Fauvet and Jacques Sauvageot, managing editor and administrative director of *Le Monde*.

5. Establishment of an editorial committee (proposed in an exchange of letters between the representative of the editor-director and the president of the Journalists' Association) made up now of the high-ranking members of the editorial staff and the members of the board of directors of the Journalists' Association, with the editor-director of the publication as its chairman. It was purely of a consultative nature, covering all questions which interest the journalists.

Co-ownership enables all the stockholders (including the staff associations) to give their opinions at annual meetings and, in particular, to approve or disapprove the financial management; it likewise permits them to take an effective part in decisions reached in the special meetings which change the articles. But it also seemed to the editorial staff highly desirable to have regular and very open consultations—a kind off continuous dialogue possible only within groups closely welded together by the same intellectual profession and the same conception of the "service" to be rendered.

For a long time, the journalists had been hoping to have an editorial committee of which they would name most members and which would periodically hold discussions with the management about the means by which the quality and independence of the newspaper could be improved. Their idea was that the committee would have no power beyond expressing opinions; its activities would not interfere with the functioning of the firm's various services, the responsibility for which is entrusted to the appropriate members of the hierarchy. Meetings would consist of consultation and reflection in common by all the representatives of an editorial team with a shared mission. This reflection in common could deal with all the problems raised by rapid technical development and extraordinary expansion of the mass media, by the need constantly to improve the quality of the "public service" of information, and by the need to increase its efficiency

through continuous modernization. The 1968 agreements, establishing an editorial committee, provided for such "consultations in depth."

It is still too soon to draw definite conclusions from the whole experiment at *Le Monde*. In theory, everyone is quite in favor of participation. In fact, few are willing to pay the price in personal effort and sacrifices. "The old man" is still hard to change. On the one hand, the chiefs and sometimes even the senior members of the editorial staff are often attached to the classical notion of authority and to the privileges which its exercise entails; they are obsessed by the desire to limit consultations whose results, they fear, may reduce their prerogatives and put an end to the secrecy which heads of enterprises usually guard jealously. On the other hand, most of the journalists are reluctant to give the time to the collective study of questions and situations which is necessary if they are to be able to express a considered opinion about problems which affect their newspaper or the press in general. Their negligence weakens the position of their representatives at committee meetings and thus reduces the usefulness of the meetings.

Participation is a responsibility which must be carried out. To make it succeed will require years of effort—and in the meantime there will be tensions and even crises, which will be salutary in the long run. All in all, it may be said that in spite of the psychological difficulties that make the work of education incumbent on its promoters so trying and sometimes so discouraging, participation is progressing, is gradually becoming accepted, and is beginning to yield results that justify it—especially by helping maintain a certain elasticity and a minimum of youthfulness in enterprises which, otherwise, in time cannot fail to suffer hardening of the arteries.

It is certainly logical and indispensable that authority should define the general line of the paper. But it is just as logical—and should be considered just as indispensable—that when serious problems or delicate choices are at stake, and the solutions can affect the survival or the reputation of the paper or the security or good name of its journalists, this line should be the subject of discussion with the editorial staff, through its delegates and the specialists concerned. There are certainly risks in the establishment of editorial committees. Harm could be done if the committee met too often, or if they tried to overstep their consultative status—if, in other words, their members were not conscious of their role, which is not to make demands or try to supervise the management, but to enlighten and support it through a fruitful and continuous dialogue. This is well understood by the editorial staff of *Le Monde* and by all journalists who, because of their responsibilities as informants, aspire to rise above their positions as

mere salaried employees and share in some way the functioning of the information "service" they provide.

IV
The Growth of Journalists' Associations

THE FIRST journalists' associations to follow the *Le Monde* example were at *Le Figaro* and *Ouest-France*. Both arose out of intense resentment felt by editorial staffs upon realizing that in spite of the great changes in the press after the Liberation, their responsibilities and rights were ignored and they remained mere employees of commercial companies whose partners or stockholders did not consider that they played any responsible role. This status had not been clear to them as long as their publications were directed by men who, thanks to their role as resistants and to their relations with political leaders, had succeeded in reestablishing the newspapers at which they worked; men who in addition were the proponents of a new conception of the press—as a public service which should no longer be under the control of private fortunes or big financial groups.

In 1949 Pierre Brisson, editor of *Le Figaro*, had succeeded by legislative means in imposing on the owners an agreement which turned the management of the newspaper over to him "and his team," grouped in a "leasing company" over which Brisson presided. The owners—a wool magnate and a sugar king—had been obliged to accept this agreement because of the 1947 law protecting the rights of teams which, after the Liberation, had been authorized to publish newspapers. The leasing company, composed of journalists and men of letters, was obligated to turn the profits back to the owners. At *Ouest-France*, nobody could deny that Paul Hutin had received *intuitu personae* from the local Resistance teams and the minister of information, all the approval necessary to resume publication of the former *Ouest-Eclair*.

But Pierre Brisson died in December, 1964, and Paul Hutin practically retired the same year. It immediately appeared intolerable to the editorial staffs of *Le Figaro* and *Ouest-France* that the choice of a successor, who would be responsible for the independence of each paper and that of the journalists themselves, should be made without their having a say. It also seemed unacceptable that this choice should be made

exclusively on the basis of the rules of business law, which are founded on property right.

At *Le Figaro*, members of the editorial staff immediately agreed to oppose turning the management of the paper back into the hands of the owners. One, Jean Prouvost, the wood magnate, is by background really a newspaperman (if not a journalist), but he is a shining symbol of a press controlled by big capitalists. In any case, the staff of *Le Figaro* was determined that M. Robinet, Pierre Brisson's deputy, be kept at the head of *Le Figaro* and that the leasing company, then composed of venerable men and deprived of Pierre Brisson's strong personality, not fall to pieces under the pressure exercised by the owners. Prouvost certainly gained ground by obtaining for one of his collaborators the title (symbolic, for the moment) of director of the publication, and by getting some of his men into the leasing company. However, he found it impossible to do more; the board of the leasing company, under the chairmanship of M. de Lacretelle and with the determined support of M. Robinet and all the editorial staff, was able to defend the rights which "M. Brisson's team" held up to 1969 under the terms of the 1949 agreement.

In May, 1969, upon expiration of this agreement, the journalists found themselves pitted against the owners of *Le Figaro*; the leasing company now was composed of Prouvost's representatives and some old friends of Pierre Brisson whose advanced age and rather old-fashioned ideas hardly predisposed them to fight for the renewal of the existing arrangements. Faced with this situation, the journalists founded an association whose aim was to obtain the extension of the leasing company's mandate and an important share in the decisions. The Association refused to let Prouvost and Beghin take back control of the paper. Indeed, the parties came within an ace of reaching an agreement: Prouvost seemed ready to accept the establishment of a new leasing company in which the owners would control the majority of the votes and the journalists a minority sufficient to give them a veto power. But at the last moment he reversed his decision.

As a result, the Journalists' Association embarked on a long and spectacular strike and filed suit against the company that owned the newspaper. At the same time, a group of members of the leasing company filed another suit. The aim of both was to have the rights of Brisson's former team recognized. The court recognized these rights and also the right of the Journalists' Association to intervene in the affair. It also named a receiver for *Le Figaro*. As a result, the journalists agreed to end their strike.

Yet the owners appealed. Rendering a decision on the appeal, the

mandate of the receiver was extended. Meanwhile, the ownership changed; in 1970 Jean Prouvost bought Beghin's shares and became the sole owner of the newspaper. In 1971 an agreement was at least concluded between M. Prouvost and the association of journalists of *Le Figaro*. In terms of this agreement, *Le Figaro* is made up of two companies, that of the ownership and that of the leasing company (or managing company) which is wholly responsible for running the daily newspaper.

The leasing company is run by a five-member directorate, representing the ownership (3) and the journalists (2) and the chairman who is, without exception, a journalist. The directorate is elected and supervised by a "supervisory board" of 12 members, seven of whom represent the ownership, four the journalists, and one the executive staff. The two journalists in the directorate are elected by the supervisory board with a three-quarter majority. The editorial staff thus holds a minority veto, whereby basic decisions—such as the appointment or the dismissal of the directorate's chairmen or amendments of its statute—cannot be taken without the votes of its representatives on the committee. This procedure ensures that the directorate's chairman has the widest powers to preserve editorial independence.

In reality, the veto right exercised by the four journalist members of the supervisory board of *Le Figaro* was shared by the Editors' Association of *Le Figaro* represented by two journalists and by two members of Brisson's former team. Certainly, this last team was pledged to vote like the Editors' Association (and to remit to it its voting rights upon the death of all its members), but it did not live up to this agreement in 1975 during a severe crisis that profoundly transformed *Le Figaro*. The five members of Brisson's former team have, in effect, accepted the takeover of *Le Figaro* by a businessman, a takeover that the whole editorial staff tried desperately to oppose. The great majority of *Le Figaro* journalists thinks that the attitude of this businessman, M. Hersant, during the German occupation, and the means he used to build a press empire which includes the big regional newspaper *Paris-Normandie*, acquired three years ago—with the aid of the government as today—after having bribed his stockholders and before destroying his Journalists' Association, in no way endow him with the necessary moral qualities to head a great newspaper, and to gain their trust.

Abandoned by the director that it had appointed two years before and by the old members of the Brisson team, the Editors' Association of *Le Figaro* was forced to give in. Its president, vice-president and 54 other journalists resigned from the newspaper in the weeks that followed M. Hersant's takeover. Several of the remaining journalists have

had their positions threatened. The newspaper is in debt and is a long way from making money, and the new owner seems to be encountering the worst difficulties in finding the money to pay the former owner, M. Prouvost, some 60 million francs more than he paid for the paper.

The equipment of the newspaper has aged. The splendid profits that *Le Figaro* generated after the war had not been invested in the paper, but instead had been used by the former owners to accumulate power through the acquisition or founding of new papers which today are losing money. As for the remaining journalists, whose morale is very low, they no longer have any influence, they have lost their sense of purpose and their association is neutralized. M. Hersant has restored the absolute power of money and property at *Le Figaro*. In fact, the future of the newspaper has never been so dismal.

At *Ouest-France*, the staff was disturbed that a single family controlled, directly or through other persons, the majority of both the shares and the votes in the board of directors and therefore could dispose of the newspaper as it saw fit without the journalists' being able to present their point of view, much less defend it. The journalists felt surprised and shocked at being ignored during selection of their editor's successors, on whom they would thus be made dependent without their consent. This failure seemd to them all the more inadmissible because the founders of *Ouest-France*, like those of many present-day French newspapers, are not capitalists in the classical sense; they did not acquire the property of the prewar press with their own money and thus did not really found new enterprises. The journalists' resentment was all the greater, moreover, because of the successors designed for Paul Hutin: an outsider, Louis Estrangin, who had never had any experience in journalism, and Hutin's son Francois Régis, whose methods the staff regarded as authoritarian and paternalistic and quite unlikely to foster the relations which ought to exist between a director and the intellectual colleagues who would join him in carrying out a common mission.

The Journalists' Association of *Ouest-France* nevertheless had some hope of getting a hearing because the family which owned the controlling interest in the paper claimed to follow the ideals of Christian democracy. But when one of the partners, Col. Desgrées du Lou, offered to turn over one share—a single share!—to the Journalists' Association, the family refused to agree to the transfer. The Journalists' Association then called a 24-hour strike whose only aim was to call attention to the situation and publicize the contradiction—scandalous, in its opinion—inherent in certain press lords ceaselessly proclaiming the grandeur of the mission with which the press is

charged and their own civic spirit, while in fact monopolizing power in their firms and refusing all sharing of responsibilities with those who are carrying out the mission of gathering and presenting information.

It is not likely that the journalists' association of *Ouest-France* will succeed in gaining from the newspaper management the right to participate in its decisions or even to be consulted.

Numerous other setbacks are not balanced by the spectacular success of the Editors' Association of *Le Monde*, nor by the success obtained by the Editors' Association of *Nord-Eclair* (Lille) and of *L'Alsace* (Mulhouse). They have not suppressed the interest, however, that French and foreign journalists continue to take in these "house associations" or corporations of journalists. In effect, another phenomenon gives impetus to the creation of this interest: concern about increasing concentration of ownership of the press which both jeopardizes jobs and constricts the diversity of opinions available to the public. In the years ahead, this awakening of consciousness may be expected to stimulate important changes in the way in which the mission of information service is conceived and carried out. It seems out of the question that journalists will continue to accept the status of mere employees. Except, perhaps, for a few "stars" of the profession. Avidly sought after for their talent as historians or analysts or human-interest reporters or polemic writers, or because they usually take care not to question established economic or political structures or know how to subtly flatter the national or European vanity of their readers, these stars get along quite well under present conditions.

It is the mass of journalists who suffer, more and more, from the inferior and insecure status assigned to them; from the realization that, in their compatriots' eyes, they belong to a second-class profession, demanding few qualifications, poorly paid, and carried out by unreliable people without a great deal of ability. They are tired of being treated like amiable cranks at best and, most often, like people who are disposed to write anything about anyone, to announce any partial, tendentious piece of news or even hide the truth in order to obey or please either the editor or an all-powerful managing editor, both of whom are generally anxious not to get readers, advertisers, or politicians on their necks. The journalists find it all the harder to bear this situation because the importance of their role is obvious.

At the same time consciousness of their status is rising, journalists are more than ever dependent on business and on private interests. There is certainly nothing to be said against the integrity of some powerful press lords. However, it seems illogical that men of this type should be the all-powerful masters of press or television enterprises,

and that they should be entrusted with the mission of public service which information constitutes without the least sharing of responsibility by those who really carry out this mission.

Indeed, this seems to journalists just as irrational as if the schools and universities were handed over to these same businessmen. Why not turn the courts over to them, too, and ask the judges they would hire to mete out justice in such a way as not to compromise their employers' interests or shock their personal convictions? This is precisely what happens in the press, where, under pressure of the necessities of technical or financial concentration, businessmen and financiers, from whose decisions there is no appeal, control a profession whose importance is recognized as being as great as that of teaching, the law, scientific, or medical research or public health—functions whose exercise is inconceivable except by men of great competence and complete integrity.

In the years to come, journalists will be less and less inclined to accept a position of dependence because their position will certainly be stronger than now. First, because of the rising qualifications required due to educational, economic, and scientific progress; second, because of the revolutionary changes which automation and electronics are destined to cause in the press. The consequences of this technical development were quite aptly portrayed by one of the press lords, a representative of the Hanchette group, M. Salmon, president-director-general of *France-Soir*, in a remarkable speech before the economic section of the French Press Institute. He stated in part:

"It is probable that with the application of automation, whole sectors of the present organization of the press will collapse, and it is not impossible to imagine that in thirty years we will have no more printing and no more distributing companies....The lead that is the traditional raw material of printing will gradually give way to film, typesetters to white-coated technicians, the transportation of paper by railroad or truck to the sending of electric impulses by telephone lines to relay-printshops—until they begin to be sent directly to a machine in the subscriber's home or office....It is beyond doubt that this development of new techniques will serve to emphasize a basic fact which still escapes many people; that newspapers are first and foremost the concern of those who write them and those who read them. The material conditions of the press may change completely, but there will always be journalists and readers at the two ends of the line."

What M. Salmon did not emphasize is the sum of qualifications which the profession of journalist more and more requires, in a world where accelerating progress is revolutionizing human activity in every

field and where the spread of education is bringing about a constant rise in the level of individual knowledge. Today journalists must have more and more competence in every field with which they deal. They must be able to understand specialists in all subjects and explain their discoveries and the significance of what they have achieved. In short, they must become specialists themselves—without forgetting that their mission is to inform the general public, who are not specialists. To a rigorous spirit of analysis, journalists today thus add a spirit of synthesis, in order to relate facts to one another and be able to understand the real meaning of each of them and its human significance. They must therefore—and this is not the least of their responsibilities—be able to choose from the daily flood of information that which is worth being presented and commented upon. Otherwise the flood would only inundate minds without enlightening. The flood itself is one of the great ills of our time: an overabundance of information which produces only confusion.

More talent will be needed every year to explain clearly, to people more and more lost in the complexity of events and the speed of scientific progress, the significance of all that is happening. For the task of journalists is not only clarity but also flair—a lively and colorful style that will hold the reader's attention, which is quickly tired by any reading that requires prolonged intellectual effort. It is harder and harder to marry these two requirements.

It is difficult to understand why the very same people who point out the importance of journalists' role in the modern world have not yet drawn the conclusion that accomplishment of their mission requires them to share effectively in the management of the "public service" that information ought to be—whatever may be the legal structures within which news is "produced." Without such participation, journalists will never be really independent and will never have enough influence to prevent commercial or political considerations from carrying the day in the institutions which employ them.

Great determination will be needed, for the whole system is at stake, and those who hold the economic power are not ready either to share it—which is to a certain extent understandable—or to accept any real participation in their activities, which is much less to be condoned.

V
A New Federation

MORE AND more the facts show that in spite of the aspirations of all the journalism professionals and the ability and integrity of many editors, a mercantile press—that is, one subject to the rules of commercial law and controlled by private capital—cannot properly carry out its mission. It cannot possess the quality nor the diversity required. How can the necessary rights and responsibilities be obtained in the fight against mercantilism in commercial newspapers? How can journalists obtain recognition of the "public-service" character of information?

France has organizations known as the Order of Doctors and the Order of Lawyers, corresponding to Medical and Bar Associations in the United States. Suppose there were an Order of Journalists? To make such a suggestion is to assume that the problem has already been solved. For as long as the press remains exclusively commercial, an Order of Journalists could hardly act effectively to enforce respect for ethics. Encompassing both publishers and salaried journalists in the Order would scarcely change anything. It is hard to see how the publishers, at the request of journalists dependent on them, should suddenly begin to swim against the current of mercantilism of which they are either the complacent beneficiaries or the powerless prisoners; it is still harder to see how they could condemn the actions of journalists who had done nothing but follow their instructions. An Order composed of or administered by salaried journalists alone would be still less effective, lacking strict procedures with arbiters whose decisions carried the power of law.

Nor could the journalists' unions perform the task. Their role, an indispensable one, is to defend both their members' material interests and moral rights as employees. But today the problem is precisely for journalists to *get out of this status of employees*—quite a different issue from that on which trade unions concentrate. What journalists want is a formula which, in information enterprises, will closely associate the financial capital, the spirit of enterprise, and the "pen capital" represented by their competence and their talent—a formula which will

provide a partnership between the bringers of financial capital and the bringers of ideas.

Only journalists' associations of the type founded at *Le Monde* can reach to the heart of the problem. Some publishers share to a great degree the concerns of their journalist collaborators. But on the whole the journalists' movement has awakened acute anxiety among publishers' associations. Chiefs of the information media, like their counterparts in other commercial enterprises, do not want authority impinged upon by collaborators sharing in the ownership and, hence, management of the firm. Yet this is the root of the problem: The majority of newspaper publishers are all-powerful masters who are virtually accountable to nobody. Either they own or control the majority of the shares, or their partners, absorbed by their own professions and incompetent in matters concerning the press, have neither the opportunity nor the ability to exercise control during the one board meeting annually in which they take part. Were the journalists' associations to become co-owners, things would obviously change, for their members are experts in the field, or soon would be.

The traditional concept of authority, founded on a sort of "divine right," has become altogether obsolete; it no longer corresponds either to individual temperaments or the conditions of production in industrial societies. In every democratic society, those over whom authority is exercised must have some way of checking authority, of calling it to account. Only in this way can abuses be prevented, liberties protected, and progress ensured. Why should authority in an economic organization escape such checks—exercised partly by those whose fate it governs? Are not such controls particularly necessary in enterprises whose activities have a quasi-political character, as does the press?

Philosophical considerations aside, common sense and realism show that in enterprises where more and more complicated problems are dealt with, by persons more and more highly qualified, with the help of ever greater technical and financial means, authority can no longer be exercised as it used to be in enterprises with few administrators, few if any intellectuals, and modest means. Today the real task of the head of an enterprise or service is much more to persuade his collaborators to cooperate than to dictate tactics which they may disapprove; productivity is more and more linked to harmonious cooperation on aims and methods. The day of the autocrat is over.

Today only the owner of a newspaper or the person who directs or controls it—is free to write what he wants, or make others write what he wants. At most newspapers, reporters' copy is rewritten, changed, even radically transformed without anyone asking the writer whether he

agrees. In the press, radio, and television there is also self-censorship by all too many journalists who fear loss of their jobs. The journalists' associations want to end such abuses.

These associations are conscious of the difficulties they must surmount. They know they will encounter misunderstandings and the opposition of powerful interests determined to retain power and influence. Leaders of the associations nonetheless believe that in time, through good organization and public relations, they will succeed in rallying public opinion to their efforts.

The first ambition of the associations is to win to their views the owners and directors of newspapers. This will become possible as soon as management is convinced of the seriousness of the associations' proposals and of the necessity to work sincerely with them in closely linked teams. The associations are not without weapons to foster this: they will not hesitate to throw the spotlight on the disparity between on the one hand, noble proclamations on freedom of the press, the responsibilities of journalists, and the sharing by workers in the enterprise, and on the other the things the owners actually do.

Moreover, individual associations need not work in isolation. In France in 1967, members of the nineteen journalists' associations, founded the French Federation of Journalists' Associations. It is governed by a board of ten directors elected to four-year terms. Half are replaced every two years.

[Founding members of the Federation represent the editorial staffs of the following publications (all based in Paris unless otherwise indicated): *L'Alsace* (of Mulhouse), *L'Aurore*, *Combat*, *Le Courrier de l'Ouest* (of Angers), *Le Courrier Picard* (of Amiens), *les Dernieres Nouvelles d'Alsace* (of Strasbourg), *Les Echose*, *Elle*, *L'Equipe*, *L'Est Républicain* (of Nancy), the radio station Europe No. 1, *Le Figaro*, *France Soir*, *Le Havre Libre*, *La Liberté de l'Est* (of Epinal), *Le Midi Libre* (of Montpellier), *Le Monde*, *Nice-Matin*, *Nord-Eclair* (of Roubaix), *Ouest-France* (of Rennes), *Le Parisien Libéré*, *Paris-Normandie* (of Rouen), *Le Nouvel Observateur*, les Editions Perrin, *Presse-Océan* (of Nantes), *Réalités*, *Le Telegramme* (of Morlaix), *L'Union* (of Rheims), *La Voix du Nord* (of Lille), and *La Vie des Metiers*].

On the day of its establishment the Federation issued a statement asserting in part:

"The Federation declares that the true 'public-interest service' which informing the citizens constitutes can be carried out in the general interest only if the journalists who assume the intellectual and moral responsibility for this information can exercise their profession under conditions which completely guarantee their independence and

their qualifications. It notes that these conditions are more and more difficult to fulfill, at a time when newspapers and periodicals, which depend increasingly on the development of the advertising market and on administrative decisions, are being led to concentrate. Such concentration can but compromise definitely the expression of the variety of opinion without which there is no real freedom of the press.

"Consequently, the Federation demands that, in order to guarantee the right to information of all French citizens, the Parliament, which is the guardian of public liberties and whose legitimacy rests on the choice of honestly informed citizens, be soon presented with a bill tending to define precisely the legal and financial status of press enterprises. Such a law should provide for the participation of the journalists' associations in the responsibility for these enterprises, within the framework of a new type of commercial company better adapted to the 'public service' character of information."

Let no one tell these journalists' associations that their aims are noble but unachievable! *Le Monde* has proved the contrary. One man said no, and his staff said no in its turn. This was enough to enable a newspaper to preserve its freedom and integrity without sacrificing commercial success.

It may be objected that all teams of journalists are not of the same quality. If so, whose fault is it? An editor has the journalists he deserves. Today, conscious of the mediocrity to which a merchantile press often condemns them, journalists are resolved to take the situation in hand, with the help of the universities, public powers, and those owners or editors who regard information as a public service.

The moment has come to work out arrangements which will ensure the full participation of journalists in responsibilities and management of the public or private organizations that carry out the mission of information.

VI
A New Type of Publishing Company

Can journalistic enterprises be organized so that information dissemination is independent both of pressure from the State and of control by money? Are there legal structures that can prevent the press and broadcasting from becoming either totalitarian (or at least governmental) or mercantile—that is, obsessed by the goal of making money at the expense of "service"?

One proposed solution is the "cooperative" form of corporate organization. If there were no alternative, the French journalists' associations would surely prefer this to the status quo. However, there is the problem of evicting and indemnifying present owners of newspapers and broadcasting stations. In addition, journalists would need to find competent managers for each enterprise. Equally important, journalists would need to guarantee within each company the independence needed to uphold the standards of information to which they aspire. This would mean avoiding the fate of colleagues at *Le Courrier Picard*, who are a minority in a workers' cooperative which regards them as mere technicians.

Furthermore—and perhaps most important—the cooperative formula would not long protect information from the spirit of merchantilism: experience has shown that the first "cooperators" reserve the profits of cooperation for themselves and become capitalists with capitalistic goals like any others. A typical example is provided by one of the biggest dailies in Israel, the *Maariv* of Tel Aviv. The paper owes its existence to an agreement between a group of journalists directed by an eminent man named Carlebach (now dead) and a group of capitalists, then as now led by a man named Benami. The shares of the company are equally divided between the two groups. The capitalists agreed not to interfere in editorial affairs; they even refrain from taking part in the choice of the director of the editorial department. Today, although the original team of journalists and Carlebach's successor hold 50 per cent of the shares in *Maariv*, the large majority of journalists on the staff hold no shares in the property nor in the rights which these shares confer.

The French journalists' associations oppose such a conception. To

avoid the danger of a return to capitalism (and thus to control by money) through a return of the cooperators' shares to the status of private property, they refuse to consider the participation of journalists in the property of the enterprise *on an individual basis*, whether or not the share-holding journalist is a "cooperator." Thus the "stock" or "shares" remain the property of the association and cannot, through inheritance, become the property of unknown persons who could use it to obtain control. The law of inheritance is inevitably the law of money and chance, since private fortunes are automatically passed on to their owner's descendants, regardless of whether these heirs are capable of maintaining the quality of the enterprise.

Germany has tried another system: "co-management." After World War II, the British put the property of German industrial firms in their occupation zone (mainly the Ruhr basin) into receivership. The receivers entrusted the factories to management corporations administered by a supervisory council of four representatives of the former stockholders and four representatives of the labor unions. The chairman was named by the Iron and Steel Control Commission for North Germany. One representative chosen by the union was in charge of labor questions.

By the law of May 21, 1951 (known as the MGB law), the first federal government set up in West Germany kept this system of co-management in the iron and steel industry: Companies are still run by a board of directors including not only a commercial director, an administrative director, and technical director, but also a "social director," who cannot be named against the opposition of the majority of employee representatives on the supervisory council. This council is made up of five representatives of the workers, five representatives of the stockholders, and an eleventh person chosen by a complicated process which aims to make him independent of both sides. Another law, adopted by the Bundestag in 1952, extended the system of co-management to all private firms having a minimum number of employees, but considerably reduced the participation of workers. It does not provide for a "social director" on the board and gives the workers only one-third of the seats in the supervisory councils.

It is seldom disputed that the system of co-management in German heavy industry has fostered both productivity and social peace. The system has shown in particular that it is possible to organize worker participation, however limited, in economic management. But in spite of their seats in the councils, the workers are far from wielding the same weight as stockholders, and the "social director" whom they nominate but who nevertheless must be elected by all the stockholders.

is far from having the same influence as other members of the board.

French journalists' associations could not even consider legislation which would not recognize them as completely equal partners of the providers of capital. Indeed, they seek far more than equality of status and influence: they want structures that will enable them to subordinate the quest for profit which is in the very nature of commercial firms; structures that will prevent infringement upon their freedom of judgment. For the same reason, various other formulae of co-ownership or co-management with employee participation, for which legal provision is made in France, are insufficient.

One formula, however, is quite interesting. First tried more than fifty years ago, it attempts to combine the cooperative and capitalist principles and permit the workers to hold a share both in the capital and in the power. Known as a "worker-participation company," it is regulated by the provisions of a law of 1917. This kind of company can be started from scratch or arise from the reorganization of a limited company of the classic type. Its assets are composed of "shares of capital" and "shares of labor," the latter being the collective property of all wage-earners or employees who are over twenty-one and have been on the job for at least a year. They are grouped in a labor cooperative set up as a commercial company. Members of the cooperative are represented at stockholders' meetings by elected delegates who have one vote for each "share of labor," just as the other stockholders have one vote for each "share of capital." Labor cooperative representation on the board of directors must be proportionate to the "shares of labor."

For its time, this was an ingenious and daring formula, and it is even today. It permits the extent of worker participation to be gauged according to varying conditions that prevail in different firms. Unfortunately, the law which provided for it has remained a dead letter because *its application is optional* and capital has never been interested. Furthermore, even if made obligatory, the law could not be acceptable to journalists because it cannot take into account their special responsibilities nor the particular character of information enterprises. Journalists could not be content with a formula which would hardly reduce their dependence on capital.

Neither can journalists nor the nation wait for a solution to the general problem of worker participation, which will probably take years. The general interest requires that shortcomings in information dissemination be corrected faster than this. They must be given priority.

This means that we must get the production of information out of

the hands of the traders, speculators, paper merchants, and other "knights of industry" with whom press, radio, and television should have nothing to do. There must be a new partnership between journalists and others who furnish either capital or technical, commercial, or financial competence which they themselves do not possess, carried out harmoniously within the framework of non-profit or limited-profit commercial companies. Only this type of company can attract persons of worth and action who, in close association with journalists, will be glad to contribute to the proper functioning of the "public service" of information.

It would be something of a feat to make a public-interest service work, with the participation of those who ensure its quality, within the framework of a commercial company of the classical type whose directors have as their sole aim the quest for profit and power. In such a situation the balance will almost always lean toward merchantilism. It seems indispensable to invent a new type of commercial company which would keep the strong but adaptable management structures of the present type but whose primary aim would not be to divide profits among partners or stockholders. For certain activities having an intellectual, moral, cultural, or educational aim, a kind of nonprofit company needs to be developed whose founders or financial backers would not be primarily businessmen but would share the spirit and concerns of the intellectuals who would be their "partners" in the general interest.

An obvious question is whether foundations as they exist in the United States might be a kind of nonprofit company suitable for information enterprises. American foundations are independent, non-governmental, nonprofit, with a capital endowment managed by their own board of directors with the aim of promoting activities of general interest. However, even were foundations everywhere as free of State influence as in the United States (which they are not), it would be unrealistic to imagine that the funds required by the constant expansion of the mass media could be raised through appealing to philanthropists. It would be better to take people as they are and depend instead on those who are intensely interested in information activities and are willing to devote a part of their resources to them without any idea of speculation or quick profits (or, of course, ruin).

Now seems the time to try to work out a new type of organization for information and other services of a cultural or general-interest nature. Halfway between commercial companies, whose main aim is to make profits, and foundations, such an organization could have structures very similar to that of an ordinary commercial company, in order

to have comparable adaptability in management. It would be financed by capitalists of the classic type, who would receive only a reasonable interest on their investment and no speculative profits. It would be similar to foundations, however, in that it would closely associate with the founders the intellectual staff on which the quality of production, and hence the satisfaction of the public interest depends. Like foundations, too, it would benefit from important legal, financial, and fiscal advantages.

To make possible such an organization, a law would be necessary authorizing the establishment of "limited-profit civil or commercial companies" for all productions of an intellectual, moral, cultural, or educational nature whose aim is not primarily to increase the wealth of the founders. Enterprises set up under this law could adopt one of several forms of organization provided either by the civil code or the laws governing commercial companies. Provisions to guarantee their non-speculative character would include:

1. Statutory abandonment of all surpluses in the event of liquidation or dissolution, to the benefit of a nonprofit organization or philanthropic enterpise, or of another company organized under the new law. Partners or shareholders could be reimbursed only the fraction of capital which they had subscribed.

2. Setting of the sale price of stock or shares on the basis of this abandonment of liquidation surpluses. Although the stockholders or partners of nonprofit and limited-profit companies would be assured of a return on their investment, therefore, they would not benefit from the increment, which would remain in the company, thus increasing its value, sometimes considerably.

3. Limitation of the amount of the dividends paid to shareholders or partners.

4. The obligation that the shares be registered in the name of the owner, and that the articles contain a clause requiring approval of their sale to a third party, and another providing for pre-emption by the surviving partners or shareholders in case of the death of one of them (or, more desirably, a clause providing in this case for the co-opting of a third party by the majority stipulated for decisions made at special meetings).

The term "limited-profit" applies only to the remuneration and transfer of invested capital. It does not mean that these companies would aim to avoid making profits and would try to reduce them if they earned them. On the contrary, in the press, these companies would try to increase profits as much as possible: profits would be the best guarantee of independence, and profits would be entirely devoted to

investments, reserves, and sharing among the staff, or even to forming a fund for assistance to other necessary but less economically viable information enterprises.

It is easy to see the advantages of this type of company. It could be substituted for those which already exist without disturbing their activity and without dispossessing their owners of control. A law along these lines would enable present newspaper owners who are real journalists, moved by a spirit of service, to prove at last the disinterested character of the activities of information enterprises they manage. It would also enable them to prevent these enterprises from becoming, through the hazards of inheritance after their retirement or death, crassly merchantile and speculative concerns. Up to now, these owners have never had any means of doing this because of the increasing value of the shares in the firms.

Both at the head of information enterprises and on the editorial staff, whose members would be partners through journalists' associations, there would be persons with the same concerns and same vocation. This is the first condition for the close cooperation necesssary between the management and the editorial staff, since, together, they ensure the functioning of a real "public service."

The journalists do not want to substitute themselves for authority in information enterprises, nor to hamper the hierarchies of these enterprises in the normal exercise of their rights and duties. The members of the journalists' associations know very well that authority is indispensable, perhaps more so in a newspaper company than in others. But they also know that in any group, whatever may be its nature, authority is effective only if on the one hand it is not contested (which means that it must be legitimate), and on the other it is supervised and stimulated. Sooner or later, authority that is not supervised commits abuses, and authority that is not stimulated goes to sleep.

The members of the journalists' associations consider that they are not in a position to carry out properly the information service with which they are entrusted—by "properly," they mean under conditions which will enable them to respect the high standard which such a service demands—unless they are headed by persons whom they can trust to do two things: first, respect their independence in their everyday work as writers, and second, see that within the enterprise the mission of information will take precedence over such considerations of a purely commercial character as the search for profit and expansion. This conviction leads the journalists to demand a share in the choice of the managers of the enterprise, or at least of the manager of the publication and the head of the editorial service, who are most

often the same person. This share must be sufficient to enable the journalists to prevent the choice of persons in whom they lack confidence because they do not believe these persons could carry out the close and constant cooperation with them which ought to exist between a new newspaper director and his journalist collaborators.

The leaders of the associations believe the journalists should have an institutionally guaranteed means of taking part in the important decisions which may affect the future of the enterprise, among them those that deal with large investments, mergers—and, of course, any plan for liquidation. Because of the importance of the journalists' role, if their association is not a stockholder, they should have the right to delegate representatives to boards of directors. Finally, the associations believe that they should have a way to express their opinions about the functioning of the "service in the public interest" which their members carry out and ways in which its quality and independence might be improved. They, therefore, hope for the establishment of editorial committees of a consultative character, in which their own boards of directors would be the principal element. Every month, under the chairmanship of the editor, this committee would bring up problems dealing with the ethics of the profession and with the maintenance of close cooperation between the management and the editorial staff (problems concerning, for example, the independence of the newspaper; professional training, hiring and firing, salaries, control of advertising, political "line," and so on).

The journalists—who, it should be remembered, have the status of administrative staff—carry out a service of information which puts them on a footing of direct, personal cooperation with their chiefs. If such direct cooperation does not exist in a newspaper, this in itself is a sign that the editor is much more an industrialist and businessman than he is a journalist—a situation which should be unacceptable.

It is precisely in the name of this basic, necessary cooperation, and because they have the capacity to help manage the public-interest service of information, that journalists are asking to share in the ownership of the private enterprises which carry out this service. Because of the importance of what their members provide—the quality and independence of their pen—and also because of the intellectual and moral responsibilities which they assume, one could make the case that the journalists' associations have the right to demand a majority of the shares in the property. But the journalists are, wisely, asking only for a sufficient number of shares to give them a veto in the case—and only in the case—of "extraordinary decisions"—the kind that are likely to upset the way the company is run or change the character of the

information service it provides. Hence in the journalists' view participation makes no sense unless they hold, collectively, at least 26 per cent of the shares in limited companies and 34 per cent in joint-stock companies—the proportions required under French law to block "extraordinary" decisions.

At *Le Monde*, a limited company, the necessary percentage was reached in 1951; it was exceeded in 1968 as the result of new agreements which show the common desire of the managers, founders, and journalists to make the newspaper a limited-profit enterprise in which the founders (or their co-opted successors) and journalists share ownership to an equal extent. An association of administrative staff and a clerical employees' association also hold shares. The experience of *Le Monde* shows not only that the formula is desirable and possible but that it guarantees an excellent in-house atmosphere without hindering the exercise of authority. It would seem therefore, that the plan should interest all newspapers and all private broadcasting enterprises—and certainly, all readers, listeners, and viewers.

VII
Conclusion

To try to free written or spoken information from the domination of private interests and the control of governments and make it a real service in the general interest under the primary responsibility of teams of journalists—this may seem a foolhardy enterprise that can only meet with failure. It is surely an enterprise that will collide with a formidable coalition of interests, habits, and prejudices. At large newspapers and radio and television stations, impressive economic and financial interests are at stake. Some of these enterprises are enormously profitable to their owners, who will obviously not be anxious to see profits limited. Nor will they be anxious to give up being the sole masters of concerns which they consider legitimately theirs and which provide influence and prestige. Many defenders of free enterprise will never forgive journalists' associations for questioning the law of profit; they fear that other intellectual professions, in turn, will contest this law and, as a result, capitalism will be altered.

In addition, many politicians will worry about the independence and the probable dynamism of an information system over which political power and private interests would have no hold. Would not such a system seriously jeopardize the tranquility of governments, institutions, and other public groups? Governments in general are suspicious of, if not hostile toward, independent people, especially when their professional conscience leads them to intrude into things the public powers would prefer them to ignore, and to reveal mistakes or shortcomings which they would like to keep hidden. Persons in public life appreciate flatterers more than they do anyone else.

There will also be resistance on the part of all those who not only do not believe in real democracy but consider it highly dangerous, especially in the economic field. Some employers do not yet understand, or do not want to understand, that the participation of intellectuals and administrators in decision-making is an inescapable development—especially in enterprises of a cultural or political character, like those which deal with information. Others are merely trying to maintain a situation personally profitable to them.

But the resistance does not come only from employers. It often

comes—alas—from salaried intellectuals themselves, who ought to aspire to this participation but who remain prisoners of nations dating to the age of handicrafts, or at least the earliest factories. Holding these outmoded ideas, they can spare themselves the effort demanded by modern times: shouldering the responsibilities incumbent on them either because of their abilities or because of the important role they play in production or in providing services.

The great problem of the hour is precisely this all-too-frequent abdication of responsibility by citizens who can never be eloquent enough in criticizing the shortcomings of authority–or, on the other hand, in demanding State intervention when things go wrong–but who refuse to make any voluntary effort or to take any risk in order to join with their fellows in resolving these difficulties.

It is true that such effort is hard and entails risk. The old structures resist, and their defenders have no compunctions about taking revenge by refusing to those who challenge the status quo the advantages—jobs, salaries, promotions—they might otherwise get. This passive state of mind, so common in most professions, usually is accompanied by a strong feeling of helplessness. Whatever the causes, resignation, indifference, and skepticism are almost everywhere dominant—even among journalists, who all too often count on luck, or on the efforts of others, to solve their difficulties. This is the greatest obstacle the journalists' associations must surmount.

Nonetheless, in a world undergoing extraordinary changes due to science and technology, it is getting harder and harder to stand aside and let others act. Progress is overthrowing old ways of living, in spite of the stubborn resistance of vested interests and outworn thought patterns. Already it has brought profound alterations in legal, social, and even ideological structures of our society. It cannot fail to change our notions about information and journalists in accordance with the conclusions of the social and political sciences. All of them stress the severity of major problems which result from the fact that the great majority of people are under-informed. *This generalized "under-information," which does not enable the citizens to appreciate realities as they are or to analyze problems as they arise, hampers progress and favors the perpetuation of injustices which are rending the world and of tensions which threaten peace.*

Since the fundamental importance of information in modern industrial societies is becoming better and better understood and recognized, the importance of those who provide information is bound to be recognized too. Is it not up to journalists to carry out the indispensable and urgent task of putting at the disposal of all adult citizens—who have neither the time nor the means nor the desire to read it in its

original form—the information contained in the enormous number of books and specialized reports devoted to the innumerable discoveries whose rapid succession constitutes the great revolution of modern times? Is it not up to journalists to explain the meaning of these discoveries, to weigh their importance, to relate them to what is already known and to prepare people for the consequences they are likely to have for the average man, whose living conditions are continually changing?

Scientists, sociologists, jurists, economists, and philosophers agree that our present civilization of affluence and comfort, which has at last freed man from age-old forms of servitude, will explode the structures and traditions of the past. Because every day they tell their fellow citizens about the events and discoveries in the world, it is up to the journalists, more than anyone else, to foster understanding of the real reasons for the changeableness and instability of modern life, which everywhere generates a feeling of insecurity, if not anxiety.

Speaking of the "imperious" production-consumption cycle in which the common man of modern societies is caught, Georges Friedmann, in *Seven Studies on Man and Technique*, declares that "even assisted by automation in and outside of his work, the common man risks becoming a new Sisyphus, condemned ceaselessly to roll a boulder that keeps falling back on him and crushing the values of thought and culture, so that during his free time he is delivered to the anarchic action of the unleashed mass media." While Friedmann concedes that the mass media "can ensure the circulation of information, arouse curiosity and new interests, raise the educational level, broaden the horizon, integrate the individual with his region, his country, his planet, develop his taste, his intellectual and artistic culture (for example, his feeling for music)—in short make him in a hundred-ways more aware of events, of art, of thought," he warns that the same media "are also capable of manipulating him, degrading him, alienating him in all the meanings of the word."

Journalists must convince their readers and auditors that it is in their interest to be very demanding where information is concerned—even more demanding than about their automobiles or refrigerators, of which they expect a better and cheaper model every year. If the journalists do not succeed in getting such help from the consumers of their products, the reform which they are perhaps presumptuously seeking cannot be brought about. For the enterprise is a huge one and the obstacles are formidable.

Many who are materially or morally affected by the consequences of technical civilization are becoming gradually conscious of the

mediocrity of most of the mass media. For the moment, the public feels nothing more than a vague but increasing dissatisfaction, a need which is yet undefined but which will eventually turn into a generalized demand for real information. When that demand is formulated, the public will no longer consent to be led down flowery paths. People will no longer allow themselves to be diverted from asking essential questions that might be embarrassing. They will not accept "information" media that try to anesthetize their curiosity about fundamental problems.

Evolution continues, in spite of everything. The victims of the current distortions, as well as the great mass of young people in all countries, are gradually acquiring a progressive mentality which enables them to become conscious of the changes that are necessary in the world. Some politicians feel this change among an increasing number of present and future voters.

The masters of the press are not the only holders of authority who deplore changes in attitudes toward authority and who struggle against them. How many parents deplore the early independence of their children; how many husbands, the steps toward giving legal and social equality to women? Yet only equality can permit real dialogue between interested parties; only the sharing in management to which employees aspire can bring about social relations that are genuinely harmonious and respectful of the individual because they are grounded on the freedom of all and on the need of each to understand the others.

In the last analysis, journalists' associations do place a great deal of hope in the best of the information "bosses," and are systematically seeking their understanding and cooperation. Through generosity, lucidity, daring, and a desire for justice, these leaders will be prompted to accept the risk of really sharing the ownership and management of the companies they direct. As is always the case, they will best defend their interests by carrying out their responsibilities toward their collaborators and the public.

In any case, the journalists' associations are resolved to press ahead. They may not succeed with their plans immediately, but as a first step they will at least open the eyes of their members and the public to the necessity of making information a real service in the general interest, with structures that guarantee the independence and competence of those who carry out the service—the journalists. Henceforth, they can never cease to demand that the profession they practice and the mission they assume be adapted to the requirements of the new era we are entering.